

ACCION DEMOCRATICA OF VENEZUELA:
THE POLITICAL PARTY AS A FACTOR
IN THE MODERNIZATION AND
INTEGRATION OF A DEVELOPING
COUNTRY

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PREFACE

The problems of attaining modernization and integration in a developing country are vitally crucial for those directly affected and highly interesting to those involved in political science research. To political scientists, problems of development pose a number of important questions--will, for example, the pursuit of modernization unify or further fragment a polity? Can modernization and integration be attained more easily through democratic than through authoritarian means? If the former, what agencies have served as the means for the attainment of modernization and integration in a democratic fashion? It was the author's interest in questions such as these that led her to a study of the Acción Democrática Party of Venezuela.

This study is the product of several years' interest in political parties in Latin America. Beginning in 1963, this interest focused upon the Acción Democrática Party of Venezuela. To find out more about this Party as a possible factor in the modernization and integration of Venezuela, the author visited that country on three separate occasions: spring of 1964, fall of 1965, and summer of 1966. The first trip was made possible by a grant from the Caribbean Research Institute at the University of Florida. During her

stays in Venezuela, the author divided her time about equally between Caracas and the interior and interviewed throughout the country a number of Acción Democrática leaders and members as well as government officials. The data from these interviews were used in conjunction with and to supplement data obtained from published sources, both in the United States and in Venezuela.

Our research on Acción Democrática centered on the role of that Party as an important factor in the modernization and integration of Venezuela. We were not primarily concerned with the program and organization of the Party, themes already adequately surveyed by other scholars. Nor were we confined to looking at AD as a reflection of its leadership, particularly in the days of the Betancourt administration. Our aim, rather, was to look at this Party as an instrument in the making of the "modern Venezuela." As such, AD served as a channel for the demands of Venezuelans who desired a more "modern" standard of living and who wished to feel as though they were integral participants in the governing process. These demands were channeled to the government controlled by AD which, in turn, sought to satisfy the needs of the largest possible number of Venezuelans without at any one time alienating too many groups within the society. In attempting to serve as a channel between the government and the governed, AD was, furthermore, limited by the constitutional framework in which it had to operate. It was also limited by the physical and human resources at its disposal and by the

milieu in which it found itself. Taking into account these considerations, the AD Party is examined in this study as a dynamic force operating within a certain political culture-- that is, as a political organization which acts upon and interacts with the special Venezuelan context. AD has clearly had an impact on the Venezuelan social and political system, but that milieu has also left its indelible mark upon the Party.

Whatever merits this study may have are due to the many Venezuelans who went out of their way in helping the author obtain information, in making her feel at home, and in submitting to interviews. Special thanks go to Dr. Demetrio Boersner and Dr. José Luis Salcedo-Bastardo, both of whom provided invaluable assistance in facilitating the author's research at the Universidad Central, at the Biblioteca Nacional, and at Acción Democrática headquarters in Caracas. In numerous ways the members of the author's dissertation committee at the University of Florida were most helpful. Professor Harry Kantor, chairman of the committee, and Professor Manning J. Dauer, chairman of the Department of Political Science, provided especially valuable assistance from the early stages of this project until its completion. The author was also most appreciative for Dr. Cornelis C. Goslinga's suggestions on the historical aspects of the manuscript.

The author also wishes to thank her husband,

Howard J. Wiarda, also a political scientist, whose comments on the study were invaluable and to whom it is dedicated.

All these organizations and persons are not to be blamed for the study's shortcomings. The responsibility for the mistakes of omission and commission are solely the author's.

Iêda Siqueira Wiarda

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	ii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE GEOGRAPHIC, DEMOGRAPHIC, AND CONSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS	28
III. ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA IN THE CONTEXT OF VENEZUELAN POLITICAL PARTY HISTORY	73
IV. ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY VENEZUELAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND PROGRAMS	140
V. THE PARTY ORGANIZATION	213
VI. ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA'S INTEGRATING AGRARIAN REFORM	254
VII. LABOR IN POLITICS ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA AND THE VENEZUELAN LABOR MOVEMENT	320
VIII. RESOURCE UTILIZATION AND WELFARE IMPROVEMENT UNDER ACCION DEMOCRÁTICA GOVERNMENTS	373
IX. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNDER ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA GOVERNMENTS	436
X. CONCLUSIONS	501
APPENDIX	546
BIBLIOGRAPHY	560

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Growth of the Five Largest Venezuelan Cities, 1936-1966	36
2. Population of Venezuela, 1830-1966	44
3. Distribution of the Venezuelan Population by Habitation, 1950-1961	45
4. Distribution of Indian Population by States, 1936-1966	48
5. Growth of the National Road System, 1938-1966 .	55
6. Motor Vehicles in Use, 1938-1964	56
7. AD Membership, 1962 Census	228
8. Rural Ownership and Rural Population, 1937 . .	262
9. AD Members Vis-À-Vis the Agrarian Reform Program	313
10. AD Leaders Vis-À-Vis the Agrarian Reform Program	314
11. Modifications Desired in the Agrarian Reform Program	314
12. Legally Operating Labor Unions and Membership .	339
13. Party Preference by Labor	367
14. Union as Entrée to AD Membership	367
15. Voted for AD in 1963 Elections	368
16. Universities and Normal School Enrollment Increase, 1957-1958 to 1965-1966	407
17. Growth in Electrical Consumption	433
18. External Commerce of Venezuela (1936-1965) . .	455

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

By 1936, after a century and a quarter of existence as an independent nation, Venezuela had not developed a viable, functioning political system. Periods of instability and chaos alternated with periods of extreme authoritarian rule, and Venezuela led the Hemisphere both in the number of constitutions which had been promulgated and in the total number of years which had been spent under dictatorial control. Power--economic, social, and political--remained in the hands of a very few, while the vast majority had little say in national decision-making and received few of the benefits of the country's natural wealth. In this way the semi-feudal structure established by the Spanish colonialists --based on an exploitative agrarian economy, a rigid two-class social system, and an authoritarian political system--was perpetuated into the twentieth century.

The traditional order began to break down during the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935) and crumbled in the decades after his death. As economic development accelerated and new groups with new ideas and new organizations emerged and began to make their interests felt, the semi-feudal order began to give way. At the same time, the

new, more modern, and more democratic order which evolved to replace it continued still tenuous and uncertain. The uncertainties of the transition gave rise to a succession of coups and unstable regimes in the 1940's and a decade of dictatorship in the 1950's. In 1964, however, for the first time in Venezuelan history, a democratically elected president, Rómulo Betancourt, peacefully turned over his office to his successor, Raúl Leoni, also democratically elected. Since both Betancourt and Leoni were members of a political party, Acción Democrática, what was the role of AD in the fundamental transformation of the Venezuelan political system? And can the Venezuelan experience be repeated by other developing nations? Or, in other words, what part can a modern, democratically oriented and well-organized political party play in the process of modernization and political integration through democratic means? These are some of the questions which this study seeks to explore.

The study of political parties is a relatively new preoccupation for Latin America area specialists. They have traditionally been concerned with the history of independence movements, with border disputes, with the formal aspects of government. Only recently has interest been shown in the dynamics of the governmental process, and detailed surveys of political groups and political parties date from the last few years.¹

¹Merle Kling, in a highly critical analysis of the shortcomings of American political scientists who specialize on Latin America concludes that "[they] have not reached, to borrow Rostow's familiar metaphor, the take-off stage." "The

A logical explanation for the dearth of such surveys is the fact that modern political parties have only made their appearance in the last few decades of Latin-American history. These modern parties serve as effective channels between government and governed, and have a well-defined body of principles, a large membership, a large body of primary and secondary leaders, a well-developed structure and system of communication to reach the population. They contrast, in these aspects, with the traditional "conservative" and "liberal" groups of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Further, these modern-day mass parties² began to emerge, with some possible exceptions, only after World War I and gained a dominant position in only a very small number of countries, among which is Venezuela.

Stages of Research on Latin America," in Charles Wagley (ed.), Social Science Research on Latin America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 168. See also the critique in Kalman H. Silvert's The Conflict Society: Reaction and Revolution in Latin America (2d ed. rev.; New York: American Universities Field Staff, Inc., 1966), pp. 155-162. A more recent appraisal is found in John D. Martz' "The Place of Latin America in the Study of Comparative Politics," Journal of Politics, XXVIII (February, 1966), 57-80.

²See the characterizations of modern mass parties in Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State, trans. Robert and Barbara North (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1954), pp. 63-71, 379, and Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems," in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 177-200. A critique of Kirchheimer's concepts can be found in Frank A. Pinner's "On the Structure of Organizations and Beliefs," Paper read before the 1967 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 5-9.

The classic work of Duverger specifically leaves out a comprehensive examination of Latin-American political parties on the grounds that the frequent governmental interference in the rather transitory political parties that exist and in the sporadic electoral process makes these parties too anomalous to merit their inclusion in his stasiology.³ Further, if one applied Duverger's standards to the political party system in Latin America, one would in most cases consider these systems as existing in the "pre-historic era of parties."⁴

As late as 1957, Russell M. Fitzgibbon could affirm with reason that "students of comparative politics have usually had a blind spot with regard to Latin American parties" and he commended the subject "to a whole generation of prospective graduate students in political science." Since 1957 a certain number of studies in this area have appeared but few among them have fulfilled Fitzgibbon's recommendation that the focus should not rest on a mere classification or typology of parties but rather that one should "seek to find out how far down the socioeconomic

³Duverger, Political Parties, p. 220. Duverger uses the term "stasiology" for the science of political parties, from the Greek stasis, faction (ibid., p. 422).

⁴Ibid., p. 228. Duverger clarifies, "A country in which opinion is divided amongst several groups that are unstable, fluid, and short-lived does not provide an example of multipartism in the proper sense of the term: it is still in the pre-historic era of parties." Duverger does admit, however, that some countries may be at an intermediate stage from "pre-history" to "true" multipartism.

scale of consciousness party organization and activity have descended; in other words, to what extent parties have 'grass roots' in a given country."⁵

If one were to follow Fitzgibbon's advice, it seems that the starting point should be an effort to place the study of Latin-American parties in the broad framework of political science and from there to work towards a focus in which a certain political party is examined for its dynamic aspects within a certain society--that is, for the kinds of interactions that may exist between this structure and the milieu in which the structure is found. It is this type of progression that the present study aims to accomplish.

In the field of political science today the traditional study of political theory has come under heavy attack. Some of the criticism is undoubtedly justified.⁶ To the extent that we pursue a purely genealogical enterprise in the study of ideas, such as tracing the development of natural law through the centuries, the fertility of our insight seems to be small. It is no disparagement of the work of scholars like Gierke to say that going over the

⁵ Russell H. Fitzgibbon, "The Party Potpourri in Latin America," Western Political Quarterly, X (March, 1957), 3-22.

⁶ David Easton, The Political System (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953), pp. 233-265; Vernon Van Dyke, Political Science: A Philosophical Analysis (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 89-109, 172-179.

ground that they traveled again is a fairly sterile task. Nor do we wish to deny that political science could use more purely analytical theory such as current students of political behavior, heavily under the influence of Bentley, seek to formulate. But after all these considerations are taken into account, certain questions properly belonging to the general field of political theory may be posed and may lead to tentative answers of value in our study of the developing nations.⁷

As suggested by Hartz, the relationship between ideas (such as a party ideology and program for government) and the people who form a nation's political institutions (such as a political party and the government itself) is one area which political analysis may properly and profitably explore. Hartz explains further that "ideas . . . may have creative impact upon the political process. . . . This is a concept designed to argue that ideas which are manifestations of anterior social forces can exercise a reciprocal influence upon these forces so as to condition them significantly if not to control them ultimately."⁸

Placed in such a conceptual framework, a party ideology and program can be studied as an expression of the aspirations and demands of the party membership. In this sense, too, the party ideology and program are "manifestations" of the milieu

⁷Paul E. Sigmund, Jr., The Ideologies of the Developing Nations (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), pp. 3-40.

⁸Louis Hartz, "The Problem of Political Ideas," in Roland Young (ed.), Approaches to the Study of Politics (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1958), pp. 78-86. The quotation is found on p. 79.

in which they are found. But the ideology and program also "condition" and may even "control" this milieu if they serve as the basis for governmental actions.

This general approach to a study of a political party is not entirely original and in fact encompasses features of other studies. Thus, following Burke, there are those who conceive of parties as "idea" groups, bodies of men entertaining a set of common basic convictions about the public interest, or about the nature and desirable form of human relationships in society. Viewed in this fashion, parties are to be understood by what they stand for, and analyzed in terms of the symbolic, verbal content of party ideology or doctrine. In behavioral terms, a party according to this conception turns out to mean a segment of the total spectrum of public opinion measured by the votes the party is able to command at a general election.⁹

Another approach is to visualize a party in terms of the social composition of its mass supporters, so that parties are identified by the relative proportions of the demographic groupings of the people who belong to it or who vote for it.¹⁰ A third conception regards both of

⁹Angus Campbell et al., The American Voter (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960), pp. 188-265.

¹⁰Paul F. Lazarsfeld et al., The People's Choice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948); Angus Campbell et al., The Voter Decides (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1954); Angus Campbell and Robert L. Kahn, The People Elect a President (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1952).

these as static, on the ground that they fail to take into account the dynamic element of men acting in concert through association and leadership. From this standpoint, the essential feature of the party is its organization, the workers and full-time staff, and the party bureaucracy. This conception emphasizes the dynamic internal processes whereby the members are controlled by the bureaucracy, the bureaucracy by the leaders, and the leaders by the other two in competition for the control of the party.¹¹ In sum, each of these approaches concentrates on different aspects of the political party: the first on its ideological orientation, the second on its class or group composition; the third on the formal and effective distribution of authority within the organization.¹²

Following Leiserson,¹³ an approach which would encompass features of all three orientations is possible and desirable--and this approach may be delineated when we study the relationship between ideas and institutions, as well as between ideas and the people making up these institutions in a given milieu. This relationship can be a key to serviceable distinctions among different political systems. In the words of Lowenstein,

¹¹Robert Michels, Political Parties (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 61-80.

¹²Neil A. McDonald, The Study of Political Parties (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1955), pp. 9-36.

¹³Avery Leiserson, Parties and Politics (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1958), pp. 133-138.

All political systems are necessarily operated by institutions and ideologies. Institutions are the apparatus through which the power process functions in a society organized as a state. . . . Ideologies . . . are the values and value systems that underlie the institutions and determine their telos. . . . Most institutions are conditioned, generated, and operated by ideology.¹⁴

And Lowenstein stresses the intimacy of ideology and institution also in historical terms,

The political party is . . . indispensable for organizing and activating the political will of a mass electorate. The coincidence of the mass suffrage and its mobilization by political parties is clearly evidenced by the first appearance of a political party in the modern technological sense, the Jacobins under the rule of the Convention. Here a concrete political ideology was carried to the masses by rationalized organization and propaganda.¹⁵

If one applies this relationship between ideology and institution to a study of a political party, in this case the Acción Democrática Party of Venezuela, one may argue that Acción Democrática was conditioned by the geographic, the constitutional, and the historical settings in which it emerged and in which it has operated. In the evolution of the Party's ideology, AD received the influence of and was challenged by other ideologies both in and out of Venezuela. Its ideological orientation has been shaped by a broad spectrum of social-democratic influences--thus

¹⁴Karl Lowenstein, Political Power and the Governmental Process (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 10-11.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 76. Von der Mehden sees the party ideology as a major factor for unity; i.e., integration and stability. Fred von der Mehden, Politics of the Developing Nations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), pp. 117, 138-140.

its insistence upon calling itself a multiclass party. If this is so, then even if the bulk of the membership has consisted of labor and campesino elements, the party programs aim to benefit not only these groups but others as well. But these party programs have been enacted because AD has held control over the government executive and because AD has attracted a broad spectrum of group support and has not alienated, at any one time, too many Venezuelans not wholly sympathetic to the Party.

In turn, program enactment and implementation have depended upon the particular context in which they have emerged. The constitutional, the geographical, and the historical framework have left their indelible imprint upon the AD governments' programs and upon the way in which these programs have been enacted and implemented. AD's functioning as a channel between government and governed has been limited by the resources placed at its disposal; on the other hand, the way these resources are being used by the AD-controlled government has reflected AD's ideological orientation and membership demands.

To better understand the role that AD has played as a force for the democratic modernization of Venezuela, it is also necessary to look at the other democratic ideologies and political parties existent in the country and to consider where Acción Democrática fits on the Venezuelan political spectrum. In examining the various aspects of the political philosophy that undergirds AD and the several ideologies and movements which influenced

and challenged the Party (such as the impact of the Peruvian Apristas and the challenge of the Castroite FALN), it is necessary also to consider the political history of Acción Democrática. Finally, we shall be concerned with the "representativeness" of the national Party program and organization.

Implicit in these themes is our assumption that AD has been a prominent factor in the contemporary Venezuelan political process. Its commitments to a wide range of programs for the benefit of the largest possible number of Venezuelans (not just AD followers) have bolstered the Party's claim to have governed in a truly democratic fashion--that is, in a manner in which no single group controls all the benefits to be gained from the country's resources.

What is behind this assumption is that we view the relationship between the democratic political system and its political parties as a complex one, full of reciprocal influences. Seen in this context, the party is to a great extent an essential instrument, a necessary condition or ingredient of democracy as we know it. But though it may be in this sense a prerequisite of democracy, it is also democracy's child. The rise of the political party in the Western democracies parallels the rise of demands for greater popular participation in public affairs. This is considered true in the history of parties in the United States

and, as we shall see, it is also true in Venezuela.¹⁶

Further, our assumption that AD can be considered a "modern democratic mass party" elicits the crucial differentiation between this party and other Venezuelan parties--a differentiation that lies in the relationship between the party leaders and the rest of the population, especially the large number of party members as well as in the type of party ideology and structure. Is this ideology in any way a reflection of membership aspirations and demands? Is the structure flexible enough to permit close contact between members and leaders and a chance for advancement of members within the party hierarchy? A mass party, at its best, has developed an organization which can publicize and encourage the mass discussion of important issues.¹⁷ These issues, in turn, are defined, not only at the top of the party hierarchy but also at its base. Here the mass party is a channel of communication and, if the party has remained dominant in the national scene for a number of years, its communicative value becomes also an integrative force in the formation of political awareness for the whole nation. Thus, if a dominant party fulfills

¹⁶ The literature on U.S. parties and their relationship to democracy is voluminous. For an interesting and recent study see Frank J. Sorauf, Political Parties in the American System (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), especially pp. 2-15, 153-169.

¹⁷ See the discussion on mass parties in Ruth Schachter, "Single-Party Systems in West Africa," American Political Science Review, LV (June, 1961), 294-307.

its mission as a channel between various individuals, groups, interests, if it acts as a mediator and a broker between government and governed, this party shows not only characteristics of a modern, mass party, but, more importantly, it can be labeled a "democratic" institution--one that is crucial in the building of an open society.

When we look at Acción Democrática from this angle, our study is not only an original survey of that Venezuelan party but it is also a survey which seeks to look at AD in its dynamic relationships within its own structure as well as with the society as a whole. An earlier study of Acción Democrática, utilizing materials mostly through 1963, surveyed that Party's structure, membership, and program in great detail but failed to delve deeply into the relationships that may exist among these aspects of a political party considered in a certain national context. There is little indication, for example, that the author of this earlier study extended his field work beyond Caracas and the national leadership of the party.¹⁸ A recent book concentrates on the accomplishments of the Betancourt government (1959-1964) and certain chapters are devoted to a highly favorable historical and programmatic review of

¹⁸ John D. Martz, Acción Democrática: Evolution of a Modern Political Party in Venezuela (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966). See also Charles W. Anderson, Review of Acción Democrática: Evolution of a Modern Political Party in Venezuela, by John D. Martz, American Political Science Review, XL (December, 1966), 1048-1049 and Frank Bonilla's review of the same book in Journal of Politics, XXIX (February, 1967), 180-182.

Acción Democrática.¹⁹ A much earlier monograph was mainly concerned with the emergence and the programs of Acción Democrática prior to the 1958 overthrow of the dictator Pérez Jiménez.²⁰

Following Myrdal's advice for the researcher,²¹ we must state that the bias of our choice of approach is based not only on its originality but also on the preference to look at a political institution--a party in this case--in its ideological, its historical, and its representative character. Above and beyond this lies an interest in studying a party that apparently has tied its ideology to other manifestations of democratic ideologies in Latin America, that can be viewed within the setting of contemporary Venezuela, and that may have served as a link between the ideological positions of its membership and its leadership. With a reformist program, with the core of its membership and leadership in peasant and labor groups, it is interesting to question and to probe the extent to which it may be studied as a possible model for other Latin-American parties that aim to place themselves within the democratic spectrum as well as serve their membership by gaining legitimate control of the government

¹⁹Robert J. Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964).

²⁰Stanley J. Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela: Its Origin and Development (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1959).

²¹Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), pp. 1027-1064.

through elections. And once this control is obtained, the parties would then aim to perpetuate the democratic processes and to obtain, through these processes, a better standard of living for all.²²

The above discussion gives a clue as to the path to be followed in gathering data for this study. Works such as those of Leiserson, Sigmund, Duverger (already cited), Almond,²³ Pye,²⁴ Deutsch,²⁵ and Ward²⁶ sketch out the broad framework within which we seek to consider the party in question. For our specific area of study, Latin America

²²Arthur P. Whitaker and David C. Jordan in Nationalism in Contemporary Latin America (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 138 conclude that Acción Democrática may have been instrumental in the democratic modernization of Venezuela. They add, "Venezuela [in 1964] turned a corner in that Leoni was the first constitutionally elected president in the country's history to succeed one who had filled out his term. . . . Perhaps the election of December 1963 did reflect the achievement of a sufficiently broad national consensus so that Venezuela's current leadership can continue to seek revolutionary nationalist goals in an evolutionary manner."

²³Gabriel A. Almond et al., The Politics of the Developing Areas (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960).

²⁴George McT. Kahin, Guy J. Pauker, and Lucian Pye, "Comparative Politics in Non-Western Countries," American Political Science Review, XLIX (December, 1955), 1022-1041; Lucian Pye, "The Non-Western Political Process," Journal of Politics, XX (August, 1958), 468-486; Lucian Pye, Aspects of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966), especially pp. 71-88.

²⁵Karl W. Deutsch and William J. Foltz (eds.), Nation-Building (New York: Atherton Press, 1963).

²⁶Robert E. Ward et al., Studying Politics Abroad: Field Research in the Developing Areas (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964).

with emphasis on Venezuela, works such as those of Cole,²⁷ Alexander,²⁸ Kantor,²⁹ Betancourt,³⁰ and Lander³¹ provide guidelines to the ideological orientation of Acción Democrática.

The research tools, beyond the reading of general works, include the use of government documents, Venezuelan publications on government and politics, periodicals, the writings of political leaders, party literature, etc. Interviews concentrate upon party leaders and party members in those groups to which the party has directed most of its appeal and who form the core of its membership--labor and the rural population. These interviews provide further data on the role of AD as a factor for the integration and modernization of Venezuela, particularly as this role is viewed by its leaders and followers.³²

The organization of this study follows a pattern

²⁷G. D. H. Cole, Communism and Social Democracy (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1958), IV, Pt. II, 750-774; V, 207-229.

²⁸Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, passim; also his "The Latin American Aprista Parties," Political Quarterly, XX (July, 1949), 236-249.

²⁹Harry Kantor, "The Development of Acción Democrática of Venezuela," Journal of Inter-American Studies, I (April, 1959), 237-251.

³⁰Rómulo Betancourt, Posición y Doctrina (Caracas: Editorial Cordillera, 1959).

³¹Luis Lander, "La Doctrina Venezolana de Acción Democrática," Cuadernos Americanos [Mexico] LII (July-August, 1950), 20-39.

³²See supra, Appendix.

parallel to that used as methodology in that it proceeds from the general to the specific. Thus, we first look at the geographic, demographic, constitutional, and historical settings in which we find today's Acción Democrática. Next we examine Acción Democrática in the context of present-day Venezuelan political ideologies and programs. This is followed by a series of chapters on specific areas such as labor, agrarian reform, resource utilization and welfare, foreign relations. In these chapters we attempt to contrast the party's programmatic positions with its members' and leaders' aspirations and demands.³³ We further look at the AD government's accomplishments as possible factors in the political integration and modernization of Venezuela.

All these topics underline the central concept of this study--that one must look at a political party not in a vacuum but in an ecological and historical context. As a political institution and as an ideology, Acción Democrática represents a portion of the total milieu. This milieu not only influences Acción Democrática, but Acción Democrática likewise exerts an influence upon this milieu.

This concept has successfully been used by other students of political parties who were also concerned with the relations between parties and other groups in the

³³These issues were explored, in part, through interviewing. For a discussion of the interviewing procedures, see supra, Appendix.

society and between parties and the society as a whole.³⁴ Like these students, we are not interested in political groups as such, although the systematic study and comparison of the internal structure and the dynamics of groups, as universes unto themselves, would be a worthwhile intellectual exercise. Rather, our particular interest, and one that we endeavor to emphasize in this study, is the role of a political party in the functioning and in the development of the Venezuelan society and the political system of which it is a part.

It is our contention that at this stage of Venezuela's development, the examination of its dominant political party not only illuminates most clearly the nature of Venezuelan politics, but also shows the importance of this party as a major determinant of the unfolding Venezuelan political scene. In affirming the primacy and the centrality of a party in Venezuelan politics, we are at once confronted with the issue of the

³⁴A list of these studies is becoming increasingly extensive--an indicator perhaps of the usefulness of this conceptual approach to political parties in various settings. Among these studies we may cite Schachter's "Single-Party Systems in West Africa"; Myron Weiner, "Traditional Role Performance and the Development of Modern Political Parties: The Indian Case," Journal of Politics, XXVI (November, 1964), 830-849; L. Vincent Padgett, "Mexico's One-Party System: A Re-Evaluation," American Political Science Review, LI (December, 1957), 995-1008.

group approach to politics.³⁵ We are not seeking to prove, with data drawn from an exotic milieu, the proposition of Arthur Bentley and others that everywhere groups are the most relevant phenomena to study in politics. We do not here wish to encumber the argument with this particular issue.³⁶ Our contention, rather, is based essentially on the highly determinative role a political party--and the various political groups that make it up or that interact with it--has been allowed or compelled to assume in contemporary Venezuela because of the nature of the society in which this party functions.

Just as the preeminence of Acción Democrática is

³⁵Peter H. Merkl, in Political Continuity and Change (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 351, explains that "the institutions of government and the policy-making process of a given political community do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of the fabric of . . . a society. They reflect its social mores, customs, and explicit beliefs or ideologies. . . . Government and politics are part and parcel of what has been called the group process, the life and interaction of the many different kinds of groups of society, social classes, occupational groupings, geographical communities, any manner of associations, interest groups, and political parties."

³⁶For statements on the group approach and for criticisms of this approach, see Arthur Bentley, The Process of Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908); David B. Truman, The Governmental Process (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951); Earl Latham, The Group Basis of Politics (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952); Robert T. Golembiewski, "The Group Basis of Politics: Notes on Analysis and Development," American Political Science Review, LIV (March, 1960), 15-33; Charles B. Hagan, "The Group in a Political Science," in Young (ed.), Approach to the Study of Politics, pp. 38-51; Joseph LaPalombara, "The Utility and Limitations of Interest Group Theory in Non-American Field Situations," Journal of Politics, XXII (February, 1960), 29-49.

the most striking feature of the political history of Venezuela in the past three decades, so the problems of national integration and of modernization are the major issues and obstacles in the task of national development which is itself the primary preoccupation of the leadership of the country. Acción Democrática appears destined, because of its central importance, to play a determinative role in the resolution of, or in the failure to solve, the problems of integration and of modernization.

The concept of "national integration" has a variety of meanings which are not always clearly identified. For our purposes, national integration is a broad subsuming process whose major dimension is political integration, which refers to the progressive bridging of the elite-mass gaps on the vertical plane in the course of developing an integrated political process and a participant political community. Here we look at Acción Democrática as a channel of communication and as an agency of mediation between policy makers on the one hand and the majority and minority points of view at the grass roots on the other. It is our contention that Acción Democrática's acting as an instrument of mediation between government and the people has been the party's most important function from the standpoint of stability as well as flexibility within the Venezuelan

political system.³⁷

The concept of "modernization" is likewise defined in a myriad of ways. For our purposes, however, modernization is regarded as a broad and multiform process whereby

³⁷ Cf. Padgett, "Mexico's One-Party System," where the author examines Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) from a similar viewpoint. See also Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems," p. 182, where he defines political integration as the capacity of a political system to make groups and their members previously outside the official political fold full-fledged participants in the political process. He views mass parties as crucial factors either for or against such an integration. Robert E. Scott, "Nation-Building in Latin America," in Deutsch and Foltz (eds.), Nation-Building, pp. 73-83, concludes that the major block to integration within Latin-American countries is the dearth of "participants in the entire political process" (pp. 80-81). In a more recent article, Scott states that "the few Latin American political parties which have played any real role in the public-policy process are those which have attempted . . . to serve as a bridge between the un-integrated masses and national political life," Scott in LaPalombara and Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development, pp. 331-367 (quote is on p. 349). Aristide R. Zolberg in "Mass Parties and National Integration: The Case of the Ivory Coast," Journal of Politics, XXV (February, 1963), 36-48, stresses that "scholarly observers . . . have often reported the positive contributions of political organizations to national integration. . . . The examination of the contributions of political parties and movements to this process is particularly relevant because it is related to one of the oldest problems of politics, namely man's ability to direct social change toward selected goals through volitional action" (*ibid.*, 36). Almond and Powell concur by saying that "the political party and the government bureaucracy are the two most likely candidates for this specialized mediating role . . . between the great range of articulated interests and the final making of authoritative rules. Both . . . provide direct links between large numbers of interest groups and the decision makers, and yet are capable of aggregating interests as well as articulating and transmitting them." Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966), p. 101. For their full discussion on this topic, see pp. 98-127.

the natural resources of Venezuela are put to utmost use with the view of providing all the country's human resources--i.e., all the social sectors--the best possible conditions of well-being. Such a concept of modernization implies a restructuring of Venezuelan society--the sectors which have long held monopoly of resources as well as the benefits from these resources will now share their privileges with other sectors of the society. It should equally imply a restructuring that takes place without the breakdown of the political system--a coup might impede modernization by reverting to traditional patterns of power and privilege.³⁸

Who is to decide what are the relevant guidelines and goals in modernization? How are these goals achieved? What has been the role of Acción Democrática leaders and members in the setting of goals, of guidelines, and of methods to achieve them? The answer to these questions uncovers the link between political integration, modernization, the ideal of democracy and the role of a political party in achieving each of these.³⁹

³⁸Cf. David E. Apter, The Politics of Modernization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), for his definitions of modernization (especially pp. 3, 9, and 67).

³⁹For provoking discussions of this link, see Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Special Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," American Political Science Review, LIII (March, 1959), 69-103; Talcott Parsons, "The Political Aspects of Social Structure and Process," in David Easton (ed.), Varieties of Political Theory (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 71-112; and Lucian W. Pye, Aspects of Political Development, especially pp. 71-88. Pye concludes that "authority and participation must go hand in hand in the building of modern states" (p. 88). In a similar vein, Horowitz states that "in those cases where more or less successful changes

In the area of political integration and modernization, no single agent seems of greater importance than the political party. This is because political parties are themselves historically so closely associated with the modernization of Western societies and, in various forms, have become the instruments of modernization in the developing areas. In these areas, further, it is often the case that a party has been largely instrumental in mobilizing the populace towards the struggle for independence.⁴⁰

For those countries where independence has long been achieved, such as in Latin America, the party may be the agency which seeks to bring within its own jurisdiction the various sectors, individuals, and geographical regions-- it seeks to become the crucible where all these different factors come together in a common search for power to fulfill their own particular demands.

For those countries where the party is already in power--in charge of the government--ideally its primary function becomes to organize public opinion and test attitudes and to transmit these to government officials and

in the social structure have been brought about in Latin America, i.e. Cuba, Mexico, Bolivia, and . . . Venezuela, the party apparatus becomes the vessel." Irving Louis Horowitz, "Party Charisma," Studies of Comparative International Development, I (1965), 83-97. Quotation on p. 89.

⁴⁰Thomas Hodgkin, African Political Parties (London: Penguin Books, 1961), especially pp. 150-155.

leaders so that the ruled and rulers, public and government, are in reasonably close accord. The entire representative principle of government rests on this relationship.

In a similar vein, the relationship between party and modernization, whether modernization in technology or organization, appears clearly in the campaigns and manifestoes of the various political parties. As a goal, modernization is particularly effective since the desire for industrialization, education, better means of communication and sanitation is widespread throughout the developing areas.⁴¹

The employment of all the mass media during political campaigns, the use of journalists, cartoonists, poster-makers, and pamphleteers, also helps to identify political action with modernity and to stress the instrumental role of party activity in change and innovation. Similarly, the registration of voters, compilation of lists, and appointment of polling officers, voting papers and ballot boxes, the use of school children as messengers and of schools as meeting halls or of agrarian reform recipients as political organizers and agrarian reform colonies as rallying grounds, and even the organization of a country into voting constituencies, districts, and

⁴¹This has been found strikingly true in Venezuela, as it will be pointed out later in this paper. Daniel Lerner, "Conflict and Consensus in Guayana," in Frank Bonilla and José A. Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1966), pp. 479-512.

wards, all encourage the identification of the mechanics of politics with a modern culture.⁴²

For the political party and the politician in a modernizing system, the ideal of democracy becomes an expansive concept. "Democracy" has to be understood as involving a variety of economic and social objectives: the expansion of national output and national income; a more effective mobilizing of labor; a more rapid development of power, industry, and communications; the elimination of illiteracy and "backwardness" through mass education; and the provision of universal, free, primary education. Thus the slogan "democratic freedom" of many of these political parties is actually understood to mean "freedom to enjoy the blessings of Western standards of subsistence."⁴³

Confronted with such expansive demands, the parties in modernizing systems rarely limit themselves to the more or less passive role of transmitting private wants to the makers of public policies. Nor are they solely aggregative devices, collecting varying expressions of want, belief, and outlook. On the contrary, the political parties of a modernizing society play an active entrepreneurial role in the formation of those ideas, and in the linking of the

⁴²See W. J. M. Mackenzie and Kenneth E. Robinson (eds.), Five Elections in Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), for interesting illustrations of use of modern machinery and sophisticated techniques in electoral campaigns in developing nations.

⁴³Hodgkin, African Political Parties, pp. 155-160; David Apter, The Gold Coast in Transition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955), chaps. V-XIV.

public and the leadership in such a way that power is generated, mobilized, and directed. Viewed in this manner, the party not only "represents" its membership at the same time that it forms a link between the government and the governed, but it also "leads" those it represents by evolving for them new goals and interpretations of modernity and of integration.⁴⁴

In developing these "representative" and "leadership" functions, the political party is restricted by the entire sociopolitical framework of the society in which it operates. It depends upon the society's physical, demographic, and historical setting; it requires a constitutional framework congenial for its own very existence and functioning (i.e., the type of political party system allowed to operate);⁴⁵ and it depends upon the groupings in the society for its membership.

On the other hand, the political party itself has an impact upon the entire framework in which it operates. A party is, after all, a subgroup in the system with its own means of generating power. In terms of this aspect, which may be the most critical in the developing nations, the party is often seen as the microcosm of the future society. Society and government become dependent on party organization and leadership for their transformation

⁴⁴Apter, The Politics of Modernization, pp. 179-222.

⁴⁵McDonald, The Study of Political Parties, pp. 34-35; Duverger, Political Parties, pp. 206-21.

into modern and democratic entities. One would conclude that parties are not merely the passive transmitters of opinions from the individual to the marketplace of the collectivity. In the words of Apter,

They [parties] represent a set of . . . variables that drastically affect social stratification, while giving concrete expression to grievances and relative scarcity as particular issues. Hence, in modernization, political parties play a critical role in building a system around themselves, by becoming a modernizing device manipulated by political entrepreneurs.⁴⁶

This conclusion suggests that if we are to uncover the link between political integration, modernization, the ideal of democracy, and the role of a political party in the pursuit of each of these; if we are to look at the Acción Democrática Party of Venezuela in an ecological and historical context as an agent for political integration and modernization through democratic means, the starting point of our study logically lies in an examination of the physical, the demographic, the constitutional, and the historical framework in which we find that party. Only then can we look at the party itself and the ways in which--given the context in which it operates--this party has sought to integrate Venezuelans in the mainstream of democratic modernization.

⁴⁶ Apter, The Politics of Modernization, p. 222. For a theoretical model of this bargaining process, see Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper & Row, 1957). See also Robert R. Alford, Party and Society (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963).

CHAPTER II

THE GEOGRAPHIC, DEMOGRAPHIC, AND CONSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

It was argued, in the previous chapter, that Acción Democrática was conditioned by--and made an impact upon--the geographic, the demographic, the constitutional, and the historical settings in which it emerged and in which it has operated. We shall now examine this argument first by looking at these settings in themselves and then by looking at their possible relationship to Acción Democrática as an institution and as an ideology. In doing so, we shall be interested in bringing out some of the changes that have occurred in these settings during Acción Democrática's existence as a party. Significant areas of change and their possible relation to the party--its program, its leadership, its membership, its government--shall be examined in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

The Geographic Setting¹

Venezuela was the first country on the mainland of

¹There is much written on this topic. The best single source based on the most recent official figures is Levi Marrero's Venezuela y Sus Recursos (Caracas: Cultural Venezolana, S.A., 1964). Other sources include Jesús Antonio Cova, Geografía Física y Política de Venezuela (Caracas: Elite, 1936); Marco-Aurelio Vila, Geografía Física y Política de Venezuela (7th ed.; Caracas: Fundación

the New World discovered by Columbus. Filled with wonderment by the natural beauty of the country, he concluded that he must have arrived at the earthly paradise, El Dorado. His letter to the Catholic King and Queen of Spain reported that "for in this Blessed Land I found the mildest climate and the land and trees very green . . . and the people there are of a very lovely stature . . . and many wear pieces of gold around their necks and some have pearls around their arms. These are great proofs that this is the Earthly Paradise."²

The news of the discovery of the Promised Land by the Admiral awoke a lively interest among other navigators, and in the wake of his caravels they came, first to harvest the rich pearls of Margarita and Cubagua, and later to look for the Golden City of El Dorado. Cumaná, an eastern Venezuelan port on the Caribbean, was the first city settled by Europeans on the South American continent. Lying close to pearl fisheries, it was founded by Spanish soldiers, in 1515 and named Nueva Córdoba. Meanwhile, other great navigators extended Columbus' discovery. First among

Eugenio Mendoza, 1961); Guillermo Zuloaga, A Geographical Glimpse of Venezuela (Caracas: Cromotip, 1957); Raymond E. Crist, Venezuela (2d ed. rev.; Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1964); Luis A. Cárdenas, Geografía Física de Venezuela (2d ed.; Caracas: Publ. Venezolanas, 1965). For good pictures, see Herbert Kirchhoff, Venezuela (Buenos Aires: Kraft, 1956).

²Quoted in Pan American Union, Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1965), p. 5 and also in Guillermo Zuloaga, "A Geographical Glimpse of Venezuela," Farol [Caracas], XXIV (November-December, 1962), 13.

them were Amerigo Vespucci and Alonso de Ojeda, whose expedition along the shores of the Caribbean led to the discovery of Lake Maracaibo and the naming of the land. The native huts built on piles above the waters of the lake reminded Vespucci of Venice; so he called the land a little Venice, a Venezuela.³

Venezuela lies on the north coast of South America between latitudes $0^{\circ}45'$ and $12^{\circ}12'$ and longitudes $59^{\circ}45'$ and $73^{\circ}09'$. Located entirely in the tropics the geographical aspects of the country embrace a diversity of regional types: in the north is a hot coastal strip that lies at the foot of the Andean coastal ranges; beyond the mountains are the broad and flat plains of the Orinoco River, giving way in the south to the extensive plateau country and eventually to the Amazon rain forest which effectively isolates the country from Brazil. Colombia, to the west, is the only country with which it has any appreciable land communication. Contacts with Guayana, the former British colony, to the east, have been intermittent and, more often than not, hostile.

With an area of about 352,150 square miles (officially 912,050 square kilometers), with a 1,750 mile

³Pablo Ojer, "Los Comienzos de la Administración Española en Margarita," Revista de Historia [Caracas], IV (October, 1965), 11-30. There has been some controversy as to who named the new land. Present-day historians give the honor to Vespucci. See J. S. Gova, Descubridores, Conquistadores y Colonizadores de Venezuela (Madrid: Sociedad Hispano-Venezolana de Ediciones, 1961), pp. 49-50.

coastline on the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, Venezuela is the sixth largest country in South America and approximately one-and-one-half times the size of Texas.⁴ Rich in mineral resources, it is one of the world's leading producers of petroleum and its iron reserves are being increasingly exploited. The Orinoco River, 1,344 miles long and in South America second only to the Amazon and the eighth largest in the world, drains most of the country and affords 1,200 miles of navigation for light vessels, which greatly facilitates internal transportation. Besides the Orinoco, over 1,000 rivers run throughout Venezuela, many of them navigable or potential sources for hydroelectric power.⁵

The Orinoco River and the mountain system divide Venezuela into four distinct regions: the Mountains, the Coastal Zone, the Orinoco Llanos (plains), and the Guayana (Guiana). Each is markedly different in climate, topography, vegetation and among them there has been traditionally (at least up to the 1920's) little of the contact and interchange which would have helped weld Venezuela into a unified and integrated nation-state.

Although the entire country lies within the Torrid

⁴"Venezuela at a Glance," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Winter, 1964-1965), 16. This is an official publication of the Venezuelan government.

⁵"Country Highlights: Venezuela," Latin American Business Highlights, XV (1st quarter, 1965), 24; "Industrialization Program Forging a Modern Venezuela," New York Times, sec. 12 (May 26, 1963), pp. 12, 33; "Petroleum Transforms Venezuela into an Industrial Power," ibid., pp. 14-15.

Zone, the climate varies greatly with altitude--the coastal strip is the hottest area on the entire Caribbean, while several peaks of the Andes are snow covered the year around. Maracaibo, at sea level, is one of the hottest cities in the Americas, with a mean annual temperature of 82.4°F.

La Guaira, the main harbor, is usually uncomfortably hot, while Caracas, only a few miles away but with an altitude of 3,000 feet has an average temperature of 68.9°. Mountain climbing and skiing are possible in the Sierra Nevada of Mérida State. Here is Bolívar Peak, 16,411 feet above sea level and highest point in Venezuela. The low-lying Llanos are continually hot and alternatively excessively dry or excessively wet, while the mountain regions have a pleasant climate, ranging from tropical to temperate. Although the seasons vary somewhat throughout the country, the rainy season generally extends from May to December, but even in the dry season there are few places where occasional rain does not fall every month of the year. Venezuela as a whole lies south of the usual path of hurricanes and cyclonic storms occur very infrequently.⁶

The Mountain Region, which includes the Andes, the Perijá Range, the mountains and arid zones of Falcón and Lara states, and the Coastal Range, is the heart of

⁶Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 74-75, 147, 158, 162-191, 265.

Venezuela's economic, political, and cultural life.⁷ With the mildest climate in the country and with good farmlands, this is the most densely populated region in Venezuela. Although it covers only 12% of the country's area, it holds 65% of the nation's population. Here are most of the country's chief centers of population and five of its six largest cities (all above 100,000 inhabitants)--Caracas, with over a million and a half inhabitants; Barquisimeto, 250,000 population and one of the fastest growing cities in Venezuela; Valencia, 200,000 population and the largest industrial city; Maracay, 150,000 population, a farming market and rival of Valencia as an industrial center; San Cristóbal, 109,000 population, traditional trade center for the plains, Andean region and part of Colombia. Here are most of Venezuela's universities--three in Caracas, the University of Carabobo in Valencia, the school of medicine at Barquisimeto, and the University of the Andes in Mérida, the latter attracting not only a large number of Venezuelans, but also many foreign students, especially Colombians. Its valleys are the richest and most productive agricultural region in the country, the chief crops being coffee, rice, sesame, corn, cotton, and sugar cane.⁸

⁷Preston E. James in Latin America (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1959), p. 70, calls this "the nuclear region of Venezuela. On this part of the country the political interests come to a focus, and here one finds the densest rural populations and the largest city."

⁸"Seven Cities Pass 100,000 Population Mark," Venezuela Up-to-Date, X (Winter, 1964-1965), 11-12; Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, p. 206; Venezuela: Caracas and the Central Zone (Caracas: Ministerio de Fomento, Dirección de Turismo, 1964).

The Coastal Zone, the narrow strip of land between the mountains and the sea, is the smallest of the geographical regions of Venezuela. It broadens out toward the west to leave room for Lake Maracaibo, and toward the east for the Orinoco Delta. Maracaibo, the largest lake in South America, is 96 miles long and 75 miles wide, and it is connected with the sea by a 25-mile-long channel that has been dredged to allow for the passage of large oil tankers and other deep-draft ships. Its two margins are now linked at the lake's narrowest point by a five-mile-long bridge.

Important cities and ports--Maracaibo, Cardón, Punto Fijo, Amuay, Puerto Cabello, La Guaira, Puerto La Cruz, Guanta, Cumaná, and Carúpano--are located in the coastal region, where 18.5% of the country's population lives, occupying 7% of its area. Cocoa grows in the warm valleys near the sea, and farther inland there are large plantations of sugar cane, bananas, and coconuts. The attractive Venezuelan island of Margarita lies near the coastal zone and has become a tourist center of major importance, while the island of Cubagua, today practically deserted, was the seat of one of the first Venezuelan towns.⁹ The topography of these islands, some of which are quite mountainous, is unlike that of the rest of the coastal zone, despite their closeness to it.

⁹Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 159-160, 230; Luis Fernando Chaves, Margarita y Su Región Seca (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1964), pp. 1-121.

Maracaibo, the country's second largest city, is the best known and most important center in the coastal region. A trading and shipping center, Maracaibo serves Zulia State, which is one of the leading producers of oil, sugar, bananas, rice, cotton, cattle, and hogs in the country, as well as the Andean states farther west. Among its most important industries are petroleum refineries, building materials, paints, beer, clothing, candies, soap, and paper products. More than 2,000 wells have been drilled in the lake and from them, over 700 million barrels of oil are pumped. The oil industry attracted capital as well as population; Maracaibo, which had only about 15,000 inhabitants 40 years ago, in 1966 had over 500,000.¹⁰

The Mountains Region and Coastal Zone contain the five largest cities in the country--cities that have witnessed a tremendous growth from 1936 to 1966 as can be demonstrated in Table 1.

In contrast to the Mountains Region and the Coastal Zone, the remaining regions of Venezuela are relatively sparsely populated. The Llanos, flat and wide expanses of land, are partly cleared savannahs and partly dense jungles. Occupying approximately 36% of the area of Venezuela, the Llanos have only about 14.5% of the total population of the country. The Llanos are drained by the

¹⁰ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 611, 265-268; "Bodies of Water are Important Venezuelan Assets," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Winter, 1964-1965), 9-10.

TABLE 1

GROWTH OF THE FIVE LARGEST VENEZUELAN CITIES,
1936-1966 (in thousands)^a

Cities	1936 ^b	1941 ^b	1950 ^b	1961 ^b	1966 (est.)
Caracas ^c	258.3	254.1	694.0	1,336.0	1,600.0
Maracaibo	110.0	121.6	236.0	421.1	500.0
Barquisimeto	36.4	54.2	105.0	199.7	250.0
Valencia	49.2	54.8	89.0	136.6	200.0
Maracay	29.8	32.9	64.0	110.5	150.0
Total	483.7	607.6	1,188.0	2,231.0	2,700.0
% of Total Venezuelan Population	14.4	13.1	21.6	29.7	33

^aSources, Marrero, *Venezuela y Sus Recursos*, *passim*; Information Service, Embassy of Venezuela, Washington, D.C.; Venezuela, Ministerio de Fomento, various census.

^bFigures correspond to the respective census.

^cCaracas here includes what the Venezuelan government considers as the metropolitan area, sometimes referred to as "greater Caracas."

Apure, the Arauca, and other tributaries of the Orinoco and are crisscrossed by countless canals and streams.¹¹ Cattle raising is the area's chief industry. The incidence of malaria during the wet season was until recently one of the

¹¹Ludovico Nesbitt, *Desolate Marches; Travels in the Orinoco Llanos of Venezuela* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1936).

reasons for the sparse population in the Llanos. Until irrigation and water control systems become widespread in this area, the Llanos will not support large population centers. There are sharp contrasts between the rainy and the dry season. From April to October the rivers flood large stretches of land. The cattle seek shelter in high, unflooded places, but many perish in the torrent. Travel by land is made difficult or impossible except on the main highways. In the dry season, many rivers cease to exist, pastures wither, and cattle starve. But in spite of these difficulties, the economy of the Llanos, traditionally the cattle country of Venezuela, is undergoing a period of transition and rapid development. The governments of Betancourt and Leoni initiated a number of flood control projects at the same time that they encouraged modern methods of agriculture and cattle breeding. The jeep is now replacing the horse as a means of transportation and shortening the distances and the roar of airplanes is breaking the quiet of the vast expanses.¹²

The Guayana Region, covering roughly half of the national territory (45%), had been until very recently a remote and thinly populated area (2%) lying south and east of the Orinoco River. But the legend of El Dorado¹³--

¹²"Here is a Resume of the Geography of Venezuela," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Winter, 1964-1965), 5-7.

¹³Edward Ward, The New Eldorado: Venezuela (London: Hale, 1957).

usually associated with the Guayana--is fast becoming true and, as a result, the Guayana Region promises to be a new focus for dense population. Gold and diamonds are still occasionally found, but it is the iron ore--with an average ferric content of 58%--that is now transforming the northern areas on either side of the Caroni (a tributary of the Orinoco) into an industrial and population center. The Venezuela government's claim that this region is likely to become the most important industrial complex in Latin America is not a hollow prediction.¹⁴ Along with iron, bauxite and manganese deposits are being explored; large-scale agriculture as well as a promising livestock business is also beginning to thrive.

Upon crossing the Orinoco from the Llanos, a geologically different land is found; in place of the soft alluvial soil of the Llanos, granite masses crop up sometimes containing petroleum, or are replaced by igneous rocks, which are often associated with metal-bearing formations. Here is Bolívar Range, a veritable iron mountain, El Pao, and other deposits still untouched. Further south is the Gran Sabana.

The Gran Sabana, a 14,000-square-mile plateau, is larger than either Belgium or the Netherlands. The plateau marks the source of nine great rivers, countless creeks,

¹⁴La Región de Guayana: Una Gama de Oportunidades para la Inversión (Caracas: Corporación Venezolana de Guayana, 1963); "Guayana," New York Times, sec. 12 (May 26, 1963), p. 8.

and spectacular waterfalls, including Angel Falls, the highest (3,212 feet) in the world. Beyond the plateau, touching Brazil and Colombia, lies Venezuela's Amazon Territory, still in large part outside of the effective national territory of Venezuela.¹⁵ A land of jungles and rivers, the Amazon Territory is inhabited by a sparse population that lives off a profitable trade of rubber and perfumes and, occasionally, gold and diamonds.¹⁶

From this brief geographical survey some major conclusions and implications stand out. One is impressed by the relatively large size and diversity of the country as well as by the undisputed wealth of its many regions. Furthermore, the vast Venezuelan geographic area has traditionally not been integrated into a modern, unified nation state. Each region tended to have its own way of life, and historically there was little contact between the separate regions. Little sense of nationalism, of common purpose, could grow in this context. These conditions have had implications for the organization and for the programs of the Venezuelan political parties.¹⁷

Acción Democrática, on one hand, has sought to bridge these regional gaps and to overcome Venezuela's geographical barriers to national unity. AD, from its

¹⁵James, Latin America, pp. 90-91.

¹⁶Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 136-142.

¹⁷This topic will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

inception, has been aware of the necessity of extending its organization throughout the country if it were in fact to gather a truly broad base and integrate and unify a large nation.¹⁸ Most of Venezuela's 650 municipalities, 150 districts, 20 states, 2 federal territories, and the federal district contain a party unit.¹⁹

The fundamental base of the party remains the junta local--a small group of no more than 100 party members in a certain ward (barrio) or hamlet (caserío) and these can be found surprisingly well spread throughout the country, from the federal district that embraces Caracas to the Ziruma (Indian) section of Maracaibo and it is here that most party members get their first and perhaps only taste of active participation in politics--through indoctrination meetings, through social activities, through petitions and voicing of grievances, through the obtaining of jobs or enrollment in government welfare programs.²⁰

The wealth of natural resources of Venezuela has meant that its political parties when making promises to improve the welfare of all--a theme commonly sounded throughout the world by politicians--have indeed a chance

¹⁸ See Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa (Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Propaganda, 1962), pp. 57-71.

¹⁹ See Acción Democrática, Estatutos (Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Propaganda, 1962), especially chap. VIII, arts. 64-70, 86.

²⁰ See supra, chap. V and Appendix.

to do so through the further exploitation of these natural resources and the taxation of those who exploit these resources. In the case of Acción Democrática, the accent has been on the taxation of its most intensively exploited resource, petroleum, together with an expanding program to exploit other natural resources (diversification) such as iron and hydroelectric potential, at the same time that it seeks to enlarge the number of those actively engaged in tilling the extensive fertile areas of the country.²¹ In this light, the Venezuelan regions in their vastness and variety, can be seen as a challenge to political parties in their efforts to reach the potential voters across the country, while the wealth of these regions can be seen as a means to fulfill the parties' promises to these potential voters.

Population--Increasingly Homogeneous and Urban

All the various Venezuelan regions give the country an area the size of Texas and Oklahoma combined--352,150 square miles²²--with a population slightly over 9 million.²³

²¹See Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática; Doctrina y Programa, pp. 73-103, 161-183. It should be mentioned that the idea of using petroleum revenues for public works, welfare programs, and industrial diversification was not originated by AD, although that party developed and applied it to its fullest implications. The popular phrase "Tenemos que sembrar el petróleo" (We must sow the petroleum) was coined by Arturo Usíar-Pietri, President Medina Angarita's secretary in 1942. See Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela, p. 5.

²²Pan American Union, Venezuela, p. 47.

²³Population estimated at 9,189,282 in December of 1966 by the Venezuelan government. See "Venezuela at a Glance," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Winter, 1966-1967), 16.

This population remains concentrated along the coastal and Andean Regions, leaving the Orinoco Llanos only sparsely settled and the great part of the lands south of the Orinoco and its delta the domain of unassimilated Indians virtually outside the national culture. Except for some Indian tribes and for a few concentrations of people of almost pure Negro ancestry in the coastal region, the process of ethnic amalgamation is relatively advanced.²⁴ Ethnic labels for groups are little used, and indications are that most individuals consider themselves "Venezuelans" rather than blancos or pardos. It is true that in the social sense there remains a correlation between racial descent and class, with strong predominance of whites at the upper levels. But persons of all degrees of mixed ancestry are found at all levels; not by sheer coincidence, former President Betancourt probably had a strain of Negro blood and the present chief executive, Raúl Leoni, is of Italian extraction. On the other hand, the Goajiro and Motilone Indians have so far defied government attempts to assimilate them. The miserable Goajiro shacks form a unique section of the petroleum capital, Maracaibo, and not far from the international airport one can see their women in bright-colored long robes and their men sipping chicha as they rest on hammocks. Yet, even they speak mostly Spanish and profess Catholicism, both

²⁴See Miguel Acosta Saignes, Elementos Indígenas y Africanos en la Formación de la Cultura Venezolana (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1965).

universal traits in Venezuela except among a few rain forest Indians and a small number of aliens who are usually English-speaking and Protestant.

The population of Venezuela increased from 5 million at the time of the 1950 census to about 9,200,000 in 1966, an increase of between 3 and 4% per year.²⁵ This rate of increase is one of the most rapid in the world and it has been caused by a very high birth rate, a death rate greatly lowered by better sanitary conditions, and a large immigration from Europe since World War II of people who were attracted in part by jobs in construction, mining, and petroleum. This growth of the population can be strikingly illustrated by Table 2.

Another characteristic of the Venezuelan population which renders it quite different from most Latin-American populations is its high degree of mobility. The search for jobs and the attraction of better living conditions have led to a large-scale migration from the countryside to the cities, causing serious urban overcrowding, particularly in the Caracas area, and a corresponding decline in the portion of the population devoted to agriculture and production of foodstuffs in general. According to official figures, in 1950, one in every five Venezuelans was living in a different

²⁵ See United Nations, Statistical Yearbook, 1965 (New York: United Nations, 1965), p. 88. The rate of population increase in Venezuela is given as 3.4% annually. Compare this figure with an increase of 1.4% for Uruguay and 3.2% for Colombia.

TABLE 2

POPULATION OF VENEZUELA, 1830-1966 (in millions)^a

18300.7	19102.6
18401.1	19202.8
18501.3	19303.1 ^b
18601.6	19403.8
18701.7	19505.0
18801.9	19606.9 ^c
18902.1	19617.5
19002.4	1965(est.)8.7
	1966(est.)9.2

^aSources: Venezuela, Ministério de Fomento, Pocket Atlas of Venezuela (Caracas: Ministério de Fomento, 1957), p. 12; Venezuela, Ministério de Fomento, Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos Nacionales, Noveno Censo General de Población (Caracas: Ministério de Fomento, 1964); Venezuela, Ministério de Fomento, Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos Nacionales, Octavo Censo General de Población (Caracas: Ministério de Fomento, 1955); "Venezuela at a Glance," in various issues of Venezuela Up-to-Date.

^bIt is in the decade of 1920-1930 that the start of an increasingly effective oil exploration takes place. See Edwin Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela: a History (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1954).

^cThe decade 1945-1955 is characterized by an influx of European immigrants, liberal immigration policies, and attraction of immigrants for the burgeoning construction trade.

state from that in which he had been born.²⁶

This remarkable degree of internal migration has not, however, followed strictly a farm to city pattern. More

²⁶As to internal migration, the Federal District (where Caracas is located), and the states of Zulia, Carabobo, Aragua, Portuguesa, Monagas and Anzoátegui have received the largest number of migrants from other Venezuelan states. These states have been made centers of attraction because of a combination of opportunity for jobs, good land, and oil exploration. The major sources of migration have been the states of Miranda--whose population is irresistibly attracted by the contiguous Federal District; Lara, Trujillo, Nueva Esparta, and Falcón. Nueva Esparta, a state made up of densely populated and rather arid islands has seen more than half of its population go

generally, it can be described as a shift from centers of low economic activity to the more prosperous areas--areas where jobs in mining, commerce, petroleum were available, where the farmlands held a better chance for profit, where living conditions were more attractive--through schools, hospitals, free social services, all of which inevitably have been concentrated in the cities until very recently.²⁷

Remarkable also has been the degree of urbanization which increased greatly between 1950 and 1960 (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF THE VENEZUELAN POPULATION BY HABITATION, 1950-1961^a

Type of Habitation	Percentage of Population	
	1950	1961
Cities over 100,000	16.6	25.4
Cities 50,000 to 100,000	5.2	11.0
Cities 20,000 to 50,000	9.1	10.7
Cities 2,500 to 20,000	16.9	15.4
Villages 1,000 to 2,500	6.0	5.0
Less than 1,000	46.2	32.5
Totals	100.0	100.0

^aAdapted from official reports of the censuses of 1950 and 1961.

The urban population--officially defined as the combined

elsewhere in the Republic. See Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 232-234, and John Friedmann, "El Crecimiento Económico y la Estructura Urbana de Venezuela," Revista de Economía Latinoamericana [Caracas], XI (April-June, 1963), 115-204.

²⁷Edwin Lieuwen, Venezuela (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 11.

population of all cities and towns of more than 2,500 inhabitants--increased from 47.8% in 1950 to 62.5% in 1961. While the national population increased by 49.44% in this period, that of Caracas increased 59% and that of Maracaibo by 78.6%.

By 1961, 4.3 million Venezuelans, nearly 60% of the total population, were living in 128 cities of at least 5,000 population. Though 56% of the total population still resided in small cities of less than 100,000 inhabitants, the long-term trend was toward a greater convergence of the country's population upon the larger urban centers. Except for the oil center of Maracaibo and the commercial and communication center of Barquisimeto, all of the cities over 100,000 are in the eastern coastal range. Most of the 12 cities with populations between 50,000 and 100,000 are also either in this strip or in the oil region.²⁸

While the density of population is only 22 persons per square mile and the country is sparsely settled,²⁹ about one-third of the total population or about 2.5 million people live in the 8,330 square miles constituting the Federal District and in the small states of Aragua, Miranda, and Carabobo which comprise about one-fortieth of the

²⁸ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 224-294.

²⁹ In 1961 neighboring Colombia, for example, had an estimated density of 33 persons per square mile. In 1960 the figure for Ecuador was 41, for Peru 22, and for Brazil 20. See United Nations, Statistical Yearbook, 1965, p. 88, for comparable estimates.

country's total area. Of these, more than half live in the immediate area of Caracas. Other areas of high population density are found in the high Andes, in the island state of Nueva Esparta, in the neighboring state of Sucre and in the oil-rich Lake Maracaibo Basin.³⁰

In contrast to such countries as Peru and Ecuador, where two or more disparate cultural traditions--Spanish and Indian--continue to exist side by side, Venezuela has only one national culture, basically Hispanic, but with considerable Indian and African influence.³¹

The census-takers of Venezuela do not solicit information concerning race, but an estimate places those of mixed blood at 65%, white at 20%, Negro at 8%, and Indian at 7%.³² The mestizos are dispersed throughout the country but the more racially pure elements tend to regional concentration--the whites in the large cities of the Andes, the Negroes in the coastal lowlands, and the Indians in the

³⁰ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 240-247.

³¹ Obviously, both Negro and Indian have left their mark on the basically Hispanic culture of Venezuela. See Juan Pablo Sojo, Temas y Apuntes Afro-Venezolanos (Caracas: Tipografía La Nación, 1943); Angel Rosenblat, "El Castellano de Venezuela: La Influencia Indígena," Boletín Indigenista Venezolano, III-V (March, 1959), 87-107; I. Ramón y Rivera et al., "Resumen de un Estudio Sobre las Expresiones Negras en el Folklore Musical y Coreográfico de Venezuela," Archivos Venezolanos de Folklore, III (1955-1956), 65-73; Carlos Siso, La Formación del Pueblo Venezolano: Estudios Sociológicos (New York: Horizon House, 1941).

³² This estimate made by James, Latin America, p. 65, seems to exaggerate the number of Indians. Estimates made by the Venezuelan government are much lower and place Indians at less than 2% of the total population.

remote forests of the Guayana highlands and the Sierra de Perijá. There are also large numbers of pure Indians living on the outskirts of several major cities, especially the Guajiros around Maracaibo. Their degree of acculturation to western ways far exceeds that of the smaller and isolated groups of primitive tribes living in the back country or jungle in the Territory of Amazonas.³³

TABLE 4
DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN POPULATION BY STATES,
1936-1966^a (in thousands)

States	1936	1941	1950	Census 1961	1966 ^b
Anzoátegui	6.0	1.2	0.3	--	--
Apure	13.2	14.0	6.6	3.5	3.0
Bolívar	17.9	18.0	4.2	4.0	3.5
Monagas	0.9	--	--	--	--
Sucre	1.4	--	0.5	0.3	0.1
Zulia	15.5	15.0	10.0	4.0	3.8
T.F. Amazonas	39.5	43.4	35.1	20.0	18.0
T.F. Amacuro	9.0	9.0	--	--	--
Totals	103.4	100.6	56.7	31.8	28.4

^aSources: Adapted from official reports of the various censuses, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, Ministerio de Fomento; compare with Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, p. 228.

^bEstimate.

³³Absalón José Bracho, "Maracaibo al Día," El Nacional (October 14, 1965), p. D-7.

Available information indicates that the Indians are a disappearing element. In 1800 they reportedly made up 13% of the total population; this percentage had dropped to less than 2% by 1950.³⁴ The Negroes make up roughly the same percentage of the total population today as they did in 1800. The only group tending to become a somewhat larger percentage of the total population is the white. This is mainly due to European immigration after World War II--Venezuela received more refugees after 1945 than any other Latin-American country except Argentina.³⁵

At the beginning of 1963 the foreigners not nationalized residing in Venezuela numbered 683,500 or 8.5% of the national population and they originated from 75 different countries. The largest national groups were, in decreasing order, the Spaniards, the Italians, the Portuguese, the Americans, Colombians, Cubans, British, German, and French. The bulk of these immigrants were small farmers, craftsmen, and businessmen who came to Venezuela seeking economic opportunity. Many came under contract with governments preceding that of President Betancourt to fill special needs in the country's economic development, particularly in the construction of governmental projects such as highways, hotels, hospitals, etc. Others, like a group of Germans, had been in Venezuela for a long time and had built up their own

³⁴U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1964), pp. 61-69.

³⁵Lieuwen, Venezuela, p. 12. A significant number of foreigners had also been attracted by the oil boom from the 1920's on.

community, Colonia Tovar, not far from Caracas.³⁶

While Presidents Betancourt and Leoni have urged the immigrants to become producers of food crops, their efforts have been only moderately successful, for the majority of newcomers still prefers industrial and commercial pursuits in the cities. On the positive side of this new policy, more farmers are found in the newer immigrant groups, particularly Spaniards from the Canary Islands, many of whom now farm in the states of Aragua, Yaracuy, and Lara. But in spite of all efforts, the greater concentration of immigrants in the large cities continues. In 1962, 62.6% of the foreigners in Venezuela lived in Caracas, with the remaining 37.4% scattered throughout the country but again showing greater concentration in the more industrialized states--Miranda (a state in the immediacy of the Federal District) had 7%, Zulia (Maracaibo, capital) had 6%, and the commercial state of Carabobo (also not far from the capital) had 5%.³⁷

All these foreigners, with few exceptions, appear well on the way towards complete integration into the Venezuelan nation. Intermarriage is common and, more often than not, it is taken as a symbol of improvement of status, especially for the pardos (Venezuelan mulattoes). The Guajiro Indian smuggler is a proud father when he marries off

³⁶ "La Colonia Tovar, Un Pedazo de la Renania Cerca de Caracas," Tamanaco (1965), pp. 14-17.

³⁷ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 232-233.

his daughter to an Arab merchant. In high society, one is never shy about announcing one's family connections with real or mythical European nobility. Yet, of far greater importance is the fact that all newcomers to Venezuela--from the Negro slave to the twentieth century oil field workers--have merged in the matrix of Spaniards and disappearing Indians. From this matrix they have taken the language, the religion, the costumes, the government and have added to it their own modifications--words, rites, color. The progressive economic integration and a gradual liberalization of the ethnic structure have made it possible for all Venezuelans, regardless of their racial or national origin, to consider themselves as one people, rather than a mosaic of distinctive ethnic groups, each proudly and rigidly clinging to its own little community rather than viewing itself as a vital portion of the greater national whole.

In summary, then, Venezuela has one of the fastest growing populations in the world. This population is remarkably young--in 1961 more than 54% was younger than 19 years of age.³⁸ Unevenly distributed in the various regions of the country, it shows a high degree of mestizaje, a diminishing Indian contingent, and an unusually large, by Latin-American standards, influx of European immigrants.

³⁸ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, p. 223.

Though with varied national and racial backgrounds, Venezuela has become largely homogeneous and this progressive racial homogeneity has been greatly aided by the country's high rate of mobility and urbanization.

In turn, this homogeneity has been an asset for all political parties in Venezuela. In contrast to those parties in countries that are deeply compartmentalized in terms of race and/or language and/or religion,³⁹ the Venezuelan politicians are not obliged to work around or deal with these compartmentalizations; they can address their fellows in a language that is practically universally understood and they can forego appeals to ethnic minorities. Further, the great degree of urbanization of the Venezuelan population has meant that parties can reach large groups of people easily. Finally, the relative youth of the population, combined with the high degree of mobility, have been factors for the openness of this population to various ideological appeals and by the same token, its small attachment to rigid traditionalism.⁴⁰ This has forced the Venezuelan political parties not only to avidly compete for the votes of young people--and the right

³⁹See LaPalombara and Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development, passim; Myron Weiner, Party Politics in India (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), passim; Mackenzie and Robinson (eds.), Five Elections in Africa, passim.

⁴⁰Jorge Ahumada, "Hipótesis para el Diagnóstico de una Situación de Cambio Social: El Caso de Venezuela," América Latina [Rio de Janeiro], VII (April-June, 1964), 3-14.

to vote includes all those 18 and over--but also to give their programs a high tone of social reform.⁴¹ Acción Democrática, which has dominated the political scene for three decades, has sorely tried to retain its appeal to the jóvenes while, at the same time, it has proclaimed itself a party for all Venezuelan clases,⁴² with a program "truly revolutionary."⁴³

Transportation and Communications

Extensive networks of transportation and communication have been other factors contributing to Venezuela's relative homogeneity, mobility, and urbanization. In all Venezuelan regions transportation consists of a wide variety of means. According to an official summary,

Plane service between cities and towns is maintained through 63 airports, including four international airports. For surface transportation by bus and automobile the country has a network of 7,000 miles of superhighways and first-class paved roads linking every city, town, and village.⁴⁴

⁴¹This topic will be further examined in the course of this dissertation.

⁴²Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 5-8, 11-71, 225-237; "25 Años al Servicio de la Nación," Política, V, September, 1966, 5-13; Luis Beltrán Prieto Figueroa, Tareas para la Juventud (Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Propaganda, 1962); Manuel Alfredo Rodríguez, Política y Universidad (Caracas: Ediciones "La Estrella en Mira," 1960); Manuel Alfredo Rodríguez, La Universidad y el Régimen Democrático (Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Propaganda, December, 1960).

⁴³Jesús Paz Galarraga, "Acción Democrática y las Reformas Socio-Económicas," Política, V (September, 1966), 33-38.

⁴⁴"Venezuela at a Glance," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Winter, 1964-1965), 16.

A more detailed survey of transportation conditions reveals that the all-weather road net in the north and west is extensive, but roads are almost nonexistent in the State of Apure and the Territories of Amazonas and Delta Amacuro and are only beginning to penetrate Bolívar State, through which a highway is now being built from El Dorado to Santa Elena on the Brazilian border. Reflecting the location of most roads, the official Mapa de Carreteras (Road Map) leaves out almost half of Venezuela.⁴⁵

A four-lane highway leads from La Guaira, the country's principal port, through the mountains to Caracas. From the capital, the paved, modern Pan American Highway runs through the fertile valley across the northern piedmont of this range overlooking Lake Maracaibo to the Táchira gap and then crosses the Liberator Bridge to join the Colombian portion of the highway near Cúcuta. This highway is the most important part of the Venezuelan road system, which totals over 18,000 miles, including 200 miles of autopista (superhighway), over 6,000 miles of paved highway, 5,000 miles of gravel roads and the remaining 7,000 miles of dirt roads. In addition, there are some 5,000 miles of cart and pack trails.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The map shows only the national territory north of the 6°40' parallel; see República de Venezuela, Mapa de Carreteras (Caracas: Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Dirección de Cartografía Nacional, 1962).

⁴⁶ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 537-564; Embassy of Venezuela, Information Service, Venezuela (Washington, D.C., January, 1965).

TABLE 5

GROWTH OF THE NATIONAL ROAD SYSTEM, 1938-1966^a

	1938	1962	1966 ^b
All Roads	1,860 miles	17,100 miles	20,800 miles
Paved Roads	12½ miles	6,200 miles	7,450 miles

^aMarrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, p. 538; Embassy of Venezuela, Venezuela (Washington, D.C., 1966).

^bEstimate

The means of transportation are as varied as the types of roads encountered. Besides the traditional mule, horse, and ox carts, the Venezuelan roads teem with an assortment of busitos which run all the way from the most modern, air-conditioned buses to trucks converted to public transportation. A popular and effective means of transportation is the por puesto, a taxi that carries five passengers for a very nominal charge. In all, Venezuela has one of the longest--if not the longest--system of paved roads in South America as well as the highest number of motor vehicles in use. The latter has increased tremendously in recent years as shown by Table 6.

Venezuela has few railroads and they carry mostly freight. Most of them were built during the rule of Guzmán Blanco, between 1877 and 1893, by British and especially German concerns.⁴⁷ In 1963 the state-owned railroads covered

⁴⁷James, Latin America, pp. 74-75.

TABLE 6

MOTOR VEHICLES IN USE, 1938-1964^a (in thousand units)

	1938	1948	1958	1960	1964
Passenger Cars	10.0	40.6	186.0	268.7	352.4
Commercial Vehicles	12.0	45.1	88.1	100.7	145.6

^aSource: United Nations, Statistical Yearbook 1965, p. 432; Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, p. 538.

only 455 miles, while since 1945 some 435 miles of railroads had been abandoned. Three ferrocarriles make up the rail network--one linking Caracas to Valencia; another connecting La Fría to Encontrados, the Táchira Railway; and a third linking Puerto Cabello to Barquisimeto. The last ferrocarril, though little used, has one of the most modern terminals at Barquisimeto. Besides these ferrocarriles are the short railroads found around the sugar mills and the mining enterprises, especially iron.

Water transportation--inland, coastal, and ocean--is very important, and internal transport in the Lake Maracaibo and the entire Orinoco basin is heavily dependent on the waterways. The latter is of particular significance because it is almost the only means of transportation--aside from a few scattered airports--for the southern portion of Venezuela not served by any extensive network of roads. Along the Orinoco, all sizes of craft sail, from the largest iron ore carriers to small sailboats carrying freight and

produce from port to port. Old river towns have grown into busy ports and new cities have sprung up near the river to house thousands of newcomers attracted by mining and industrial operations, among them Ciudad Bolívar and Santo Tomé de la Guayana. The only barrier to continuous navigation on the Orinoco are the rapids below Puerto Ayacucho, capital of the Amazonas Territory. Otherwise, navigation would be possible from the Gulf of Paria, on the Caribbean, through the Orinoco and the Amazon, to the mouth of the latter river in the Atlantic. The vision of just such super waterway is by no means ignored by the Venezuelans.⁴⁸

As with transportation, there is little doubt that the Venezuelan people are well served by formal communication facilities. For a population of a little over 9 million, there are around 50 major daily newspapers with a total circulation close to 1 million. In 1963, 17 major daily newspapers, with a circulation of 633,000 copies, provided 78 units per 1,000 of the population. This compared favorably with most Latin-American countries. All Brazilian newspapers, for example, provided only 54 units per 1,000 population; Colombia and Ecuador newspapers provided 52 units per 1,000 population; Haiti's four major dailies provided only 6 units per 1,000 population.⁴⁹

Venezuela probably had more television receivers

⁴⁸"Bodies of Water," pp. 9-10; Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 551-560.

⁴⁹United Nations, Statistical Yearbook 1965, pp. 725-726.

(591,000) and more radio receivers (1,651,000) in 1964 than any other South American country.⁵⁰ On a national basis, radio has been the most effective means of mass communication in Venezuela and politicians have used it to promote themselves and their programs. Television debates among candidates have also become usual occurrences. Although the precarious financial situation of many in the lower class, especially the campesinos, would prevent the purchase of a radio, contact with the outside world is almost certainly established in public places--no bar, no matter how run down, will survive without a battery radio--or the homes of friends. It is customary, for example, for the patrón to allow his farm hands to listen to some programs he may deem interesting or educational.⁵¹

The lack of professionalization among reporters and radio television personnel, aligned with an extensive affiliation of these mass media monitors with extremist political factions, however, has made the communications network in Venezuela less than an ideal vehicle to transmit news and programs.⁵² For its part, the government has intervened often and at times drastically; during the

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 733, 735.

⁵¹ U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, pp. 283-305.

⁵² Páez Celiz, "Evaluación de las Omisiones y de las Defunciones de los Periódicos 1936, 1941, y 1950," Revista de Fomento [Caracas], I (March 30, 1962), 67-80; "El Código de Ética de la Televisión Venezolana," Tiempo Económico [Caracas], I (September, 1964), 14-15.

administrations of Betancourt and Leoni censorship of the press ranged from moderate to the extreme.⁵³ The Caracas press, in turn, has often carried vitriolic attacks on the government and the government has retaliated by temporarily suspending publication of the offending journals and detaining their editors. In this fashion, the Venezuelan communications media network, though one of the best in Latin America in absolute terms, has not always worked for harmonious relations among the government, the people, and the communication media personnel themselves. It does, nevertheless, provide the government with a channel for communication to the people, to the various regions, and between the capital and the interior; especially because the government is the major news source, it has its own powerful stations, and it regulates whatever else is permitted to be broadcast or disseminated elsewhere.⁵⁴ In addition, Acción Democrática has been closely associated with the daily La República, created in 1961, which has a fairly wide circulation (37,000 throughout the country) and which gives the AD party leadership and pronouncements extensive coverage. The popular magazine Momento has also been favorable to Acción Democrática and usually gives that party a broader coverage than it does

⁵³U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, pp. 285-286.

⁵⁴See Antonio Pasquali, Comunicación y Cultura de Masas, la Masificación de la Cultura en las Regiones Subdesarrolladas; Estudio Sociológico y Comunicacional (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1964), pp. 1-308.

for other political organizations. The semi-scholarly monthly Política, which publishes background articles on the Latin-American democratic Left (especially AD) and progress reports on AD government programs, is another channel between the party and the individual Venezuelan citizen.

The Venezuelan Constitutional System

The conflict between the ideal of freedom of expression in the communications media and the frequent need to curtail this freedom to prevent the undermining of the government⁵⁵ is paralleled by a similar conflict between the ideals of the Constitution and the Venezuelan political reality. The various Venezuelan constitutions--from the time of the Independence--describe the form of the government as democratic, responsible, elective, representative, and federal.⁵⁶ This description has not been altogether accurate; the ideals of the Venezuelan constitutions often have represented goals and have not yet become fully operating reality in the country. This point is illustrated by an examination of the problems of federalism in Venezuela especially as they reflect upon the powers of the executive.

⁵⁵Admittedly, Venezuela is not unique in this respect; see Luis Castaño, "El Desarrollo de los Medios de Información en América Latina y el Crisis de la Libertad de Expresión," Ciencias Políticas y Sociales [Mexico], VIII (April-June, 1962), 291-306.

⁵⁶Venezuela, Secretaría General de la Presidencia de la República, Constitución, 1961 (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1961), republished in English by Pan American Union, Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, 1961 (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1963).

In turn, the executive, because of its powers, becomes all the more attractive--and crucial--for the Venezuelan political party. If the party can obtain control of the executive, its program has that much more chance of being implemented, thus satisfying electoral promises as well as giving jobs to party members and sympathizers. Fulfillment of programs as well as the sharing of the spoils of office eventually means the strengthening of the party--and the possible retaining of the executive in subsequent elections. In this fashion, the actual operation of the Venezuelan "constitutional" system is intimately related to the way a political party (such as Acción Democrática) itself operates and can fulfill its program through control of the executive.

From the declaration of independence in 1810, through more than a century of virtually uninterrupted dictatorship, followed only in very recent years by a turn to liberal democratic government, the country's constitutions have preserved a federal form that bears great resemblance to the United States constitution which served as their model.⁵⁷ They outline a federal government composed of semi-autonomous states; separation of powers; the tripartite division of government into legislative, executive, and judiciary; checks and balances; provisions for admission of new states; and a

⁵⁷ Alexander T. Edelman, Latin American Government and Politics (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1965), pp. 375 and 378.

list of private rights. This form has shown little substance through the years and through the various administrations in Venezuelan history.⁵⁸

Thus, while the federal union of Venezuela is said to consist of 20 states, a federal district, two federal territories, and 72 island dependencies, these entities have in reality been subordinated to the power in Caracas. The states have always occupied a weak position in the basic governmental structure, a fact amply demonstrated by the number of territorial changes they have suffered since the adoption of the federal system in 1864. Thus, the Congress of 1856 created a territorial division embracing 21 states. In 1864 the number was 20; in 1881 it dwindled to 9; in 1899, 20 again, in 1904, 13; and in 1909 back to 20 states. State sovereignty was respected in none of the changes, the initiative coming in each case from the national congress, acting on orders from the president. The states, in a further show of their weakness, have unanimously ratified the territorial

⁵⁸ See Juan Vicente González, La Constitución y el Fusil (Caracas: Presidencia de la República, 1963), pp. 1-139. Though this book presents a collection of articles dealing almost exclusively with the nineteenth century situation, it is still applicable to the present. For more recent maneuvers to bend the Constitution to the presidential wishes, see A. Arellano Moreno, "Las Siete Reformas Constitucionales del General Juan Vicente Gómez," Política, III (September, 1963), 31-72. The overall constitutional history of Venezuela remains José Gil Fortoul, Historia Constitucional de Venezuela (3 vols.; Caracas: Editorial Sur America, 1930). For comparisons with other Latin-American countries, see James L. Busey, "Observations on Latin American Constitutionalism," Americas, XXIV (July, 1967), 46-66 and J. Lloyd Meacham, "Latin American Constitutions--Nominal and Real," Journal of Politics, XXI (May, 1959), 258-275.

changes required of them. Furthermore, the sparsity and isolation of the population in some states (e.g., Bolívar state) make them inherently weak as semi-autonomous units in a federal system. They have no choice but to look toward Caracas for the satisfaction of most of their economic, social, and political needs.⁵⁹

The operation of the Venezuelan government since 1864 has been marked by a pronounced trend toward concentration of power in the national government and, in particular, in the national executive. In 1864, in response to the so-called federal revolution, the states gained important powers of their own and, in theory, possessed all powers not granted to the national government. By 1953 they had lost all but those powers permitting them to write their own constitutions, change their names, and administer the revenue they received from the national treasury. The 1961 constitution continued those powers and restored to the states the right to determine the organization of their public powers, municipalities, and police forces. It also restored the reserve powers clause, but this meant little in the face of the extensive grants to the national government which continued to appear in the 1961 chart.⁶⁰

⁵⁹James, Latin America, pp. 94-95, attests that the Venezuelan population is very unevenly distributed and that this is another factor which hinders federalism.

⁶⁰Salvador M. Dana Montaña, "Sobre el Federalismo," Revista de la Facultad de Derecho [Maracaibo], II (May-August, 1962), 43-51.

Another innovation of the 1961 constitution was the restoration of a provision that would permit the people to choose their state governors. This innovation has remained theoretical until now; as in the past, state executives continue to be chosen or at the very least tolerated by the president. The weakness of the state governor in the Venezuelan federal system is attested by the fact that between 1936 and 1953 there were 262 governors out of which 207 were in office less than 15 months each and 106 held power for less than 6 months.⁶¹ The national constitution itself places the state governor in an ambiguous position--it declares him to be an agent of the national government charged with executing faithfully all the national laws, while at the same time he is charged by the state constitution with the task of preserving the autonomy of the state against "all" encroachments. It is not surprising that governors have always been chosen more for their loyalty to the national caudillo of the day than for their administrative ability. If Pérez Jiménez had not been overthrown in 1958, the national dominance might have become practically total. Shortly before his ouster, a special congress under the dictator's orders elected the members of all state legislatures and even all members of municipal councils in the country.⁶²

⁶¹ William S. Stokes, Latin American Politics (2d ed. rev.; New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1964), p. 492.

⁶² Leo B. Lott, "Venezuela," in Martin C. Needler (ed.), Political Systems of Latin America (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1964), p. 256.

The vestiges that remain in the Venezuelan constitutional system of a "federal" form seem to point more to a division of power between national and municipal governments than to a division between state and national governments.⁶³ While the states have lost most of their power to tax, the municipalities do have a more or less well-defined fiscal basis. States not only are excluded from all fields taxed by the national government, but they are also forbidden to levy taxes in areas granted to the towns and cities, which derive their income from taxes on public entertainment, commerce and industry, certain types of licenses, urban real estate, and municipal services. The control of a dependable source of income, a necessary condition for autonomy, is thus denied to the states and is instead divided between the national government, which takes the lion's share, and the municipalities.⁶⁴

Both states and municipalities lost whatever say they ever had on the judiciary when, in 1945, the states surrendered their last major power and ratified a

⁶³ Salvador M. Dana Montaña, "El Régimen Municipal en la Nueva Constitución de Venezuela," Revista de la Facultad de Derecho [Maracaibo], I (September-December, 1961), 53-65.

⁶⁴ The Constitution of 1961 provides that the national government shall distribute 12.5% of its annual estimated ordinary revenue to the states and that this minimum figure shall be increased at the rate of 0.5% each year beginning in 1962 until it reaches a minimum of 15%. This is offset by the exigency that states coordinate their budgets and expenditures with directions issued by the national government, which suggests appropriate ways to utilize the funds to fit in with national plans for development. See Pan American Union, Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, 1961, Title VIII, chaps. I and II.

constitutional amendment which conferred upon the national government exclusive control of the judicial system. The actual transfer of power from the states to the national government did not occur until November, 1948, in the early days of a decade of dictatorship and further encroachments upon the last remains of "federalism." A nationalizing decree abrogated all the state judicial codes and statutes and promulgated the national one in their stead. A ministry of justice was created in 1950 to supervise not only the unified judicial structure, but also all penitentiaries and other correctional institutions. Again, although Venezuela is technically a federal state, in practice and in fact the judicial system is entirely controlled by the national government; hence there are no state courts.⁶⁵

The net effect in practice has been that the states, though called autonomous, actually have very narrowly restricted residual powers limited to such as do not infringe upon those pertaining either to the nation or to the municipalities.⁶⁶ The almost fictional character of the Venezuelan federalism was frankly admitted by the framers of the 1961 constitution when they clearly implied in their report that they had chosen to retain the term "federal" in

⁶⁵ Edelman, Latin American Government and Politics, pp. 451, 452, 454, 456, 457, 469; Leo B. Lott, "The Nationalization of Justice in Venezuela," Inter-American Economic Affairs, XIII (Summer, 1959), 3-19.

⁶⁶ See Leo B. Lott, "Venezuelan Federalism: A Case Study in Frustration" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Political Science, University of Wisconsin, 1954), especially pp. 2, 5, 7, 15, 16, 19-23, 35-37, 43-85, 169, 175-179.

deference to the long standing and popularly accepted tradition of providing at least a vestigial autonomy of the states. As a specialist on Venezuelan federalism concluded,

Federalism is a fiction in Venezuela. What has always existed is a centralized, unitary form of government, and the Venezuelans are perfectly aware of it. It may be that their devotion to federalism is to the principle and not to practical application, and that in the final analysis it remains in existence only as a response to the emotional idealism of the Venezuelan people who see in it the unattainable goal of local self-government.⁶⁷

This somewhat "fictional" character of federalism, which is perhaps more pronounced in Venezuela than in the other two Latin-American federal countries, is accompanied by a very real ejecutivista character, a not uncommon trait in Latin America.⁶⁸ Taken in the aggregate, the executive powers endow the president with sweeping authority and completely overshadow the fairly small grants to the congress. If there is any one section of the 1961 constitution which can be said to faithfully reflect the nature of political power in present-day Venezuela, it is that which deals with

⁶⁷ Lott, "Venezuela," Needler (ed.), Political Systems of Latin America, pp. 238-268. The quotation is on p. 256.

⁶⁸ Leo B. Lott, "Executive Power in Venezuela," American Political Science Review, L (June, 1956), 422-441. It should also be noted that until recently, there were three other federal countries in Latin America: Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico. The new Brazilian constitution (1966), however, seems to indicate that that country should no longer be considered a federal state. In fact, many official documents no longer bear the "Estados Unidos do Brasil" letterhead but simply "Brasil."

the executive power.⁶⁹

A vital part of the chief of state's power lies in his control of the armed forces. The president as commander in chief is charged with its organization and operation. He fixes the size of the military establishment and controls the appointment of officers. He is charged with the defense of the national territory and the sovereignty of the Republic, in event of an international emergency. Since 1958 the Venezuelan civilian presidents have held a firm--if uneasy and tenuous at times--preponderance over the armed forces. This is a novelty in Venezuelan history, but there are guarded hopes that it may become part and parcel of the actual pattern of politics.⁷⁰

The president is also responsible for the enforcement of the Constitution and the laws and therefore ultimately responsible for internal law and order in a national sense. He is authorized to declare a state of emergency and to restrict or suspend certain constitutional guarantees in the event of internal or external conflict or whenever there

⁶⁹Lott, "Venezuela," Needler (ed.), Political Systems of Latin America, p. 257.

⁷⁰Gral. Martín García Villasmil, "Las Fuerzas Armadas de la República," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 161-169. The director of the military school of Venezuela declares in this article that "the respect for the constitution and the national laws, which has been evident in the present day [military] institution, has been a very important factor in the consolidation of the republican democratic system in Venezuela," (p. 166). He goes on to underline the military support for the freely elected constitutional officials. See also Edwin Lieuwen, Generals vs. Presidents (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), pp. 66-91.

is good reason to believe that such may occur.

Guarantees which may not be suspended are those forbidding the holding of persons incommunicado, perpetual imprisonment, torture, and the death penalty. The state of emergency, the guarantees suspended, and the reasons for the action must be announced by a decree of the Council of Ministers and be authorized by Congress in joint session or, if not in session, by the Standing Committee.

Less specifically limited is a provision of the Constitution which empowers the president to suspend constitutional guarantees, either totally or in part, when in his opinion and that of his council of ministers, situations arise which could lead to "national or international emergencies." The power to suspend parts of the constitution has been an effective weapon in the hands of presidents who have used it to harass their political enemies. Terroristic activities which plagued the Betancourt regime from its inception in 1959 made it necessary for him to suspend certain constitutional guarantees from November, 1960, throughout most of his administration.⁷¹ President Leoni has not needed to use this power to such an

⁷¹For justifications of Betancourt's actions, see two Acción Democrática publications: Braulio Jatar Dotti, Inhabilitación de la Extrema Izquierda y Guerrillas Corianas (Caracas: Colección "Pueblo y Parlamento," 1963); and Jesús Angel Paz Calarraga, Violencia y Suspensión de Garantías (Caracas: Colección "Pueblo y Parlamento," 1963). Paz Calarraga, who has been mentioned as a possible presidential candidate in 1968, was secretary general of Acción Democrática for seven years and was its first vice-president in 1966.

extent as his government has been less threatened by terrorism and subversion from either Right or Left.

The presidential legislative powers are also sweeping in their scope. Although the main body of law rests upon legislation passed by congress, the president and his staff have been the authors of most of it. More importantly, the executive's "decree" powers are almost unchecked in practice. Thus, the president can create and suppress public services--he has created such executive departments as the ministries of agriculture and livestock, of health and social welfare, of justice, and of mines and hydrocarbons, and a rash of autonomous institutes or autarquias as the National Agrarian Institute, the Venezuelan Airmail Line, the Venezuelan Corporation of the Guayana, to name but a few.

These traditional decree powers of the presidents have made them reluctant observers of the niceties of executive-legislative relations prescribed by the various constitutions. This pattern has been somewhat altered in more recent years.

The Congress traditionally had almost no initiative at all and was considered an assembly of employees--after all, the congressmen had all been "elected" through the good will or at least the tolerance of the caudillo president of the moment. They usually limited themselves to ordering the erection of statues and to conferring new honors and titles on the chief executive. Legislators were expected and in fact did enact into law, speedily and without modifications, whatever proposals came from the president.

Budgets passed year after year without any congressional revision and the 1953 constitution in fact indicated that the national budget would go into effect on July 1 of every year, with or without congressional approval.

Since the fall of the dictatorship in 1958, Venezuelan presidents have been confronted with an unprecedented situation in which congressmen have indeed exerted some initiative and have gone so far as to frustrate--and even reject--many of the president's proposals. But since this situation has prevailed only while the presidential party was not in full control of both houses of congress and because the president still retains many of his decree powers in practice, one can hardly speak of a trend away from the ejecutivista orientation in the Venezuelan governmental system.

Federalism has always in the Venezuelan context meant weak state and local units and a strong executive, while legislative-executive relations have traditionally been dominated by the president. For all these reasons, the Venezuelan executive is a prize to be coveted, for in terms of executive powers granted by the constitution and even more in the practical operation of the Venezuelan constitutionalism, whatever party can attain the presidency will have in its hands the coveted challenge of pushing Venezuela further along the road of modernization. The geographical regions of the country with their impressive physical resources, the relative homogeneity of the

population, the extensive transportation and communications systems all can be seen--and used--as factors for the political integration and economic modernization of the country. How have the Venezuelan political parties responded to this prize and to this challenge.

CHAPTER III

ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA IN THE CONTEXT OF VENEZUELAN POLITICAL PARTY HISTORY

Latin America is becoming ever more complex politically. One of the indications of this recent complexity is the emergence of modern political parties. The traditional caudillismo of the region is declining while politics is becoming increasingly a clash of interests, of programs, of ideas, and less a mere struggle for power among charismatic leaders.¹ This trend toward political complexity, with the passing away of the monopoly of power held by the very few and the emergence of political parties imbued with a devotion to the masses and to their demands for greater economic development to be shared by all, is particularly true in the case of Venezuela.²

¹Robert J. Alexander, "The Emergence of Modern Political Parties in Latin America," in Joseph Maier and Richard W. Weatherhead (eds.), Politics of Change in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 101-125.

²Jorge Ahumada, "Hipótesis para el Diagnóstico de una Situación de Cambio Social: el Caso de Venezuela," América Latina [Rio de Janeiro], VII (April-June, 1964), 3-14; Scott, "Political Parties and Policy-Making in Latin America," in La Palombara and Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development, pp. 331-367.

The emergence of modern political parties in Venezuela can be seen as a reflection of the basic economic and social changes that have taken place during the last two generations. With the development of important middle groups in society, politics is no longer, as it was during the first century of independence, merely a game played among rival cliques of a small ruling class.

Today Venezuela is characterized by increasing industrialization, urbanization, and a population ever more homogeneous. Transportation facilities link the most remote regions and the communications network is capable of reaching all parts of the country. The old social molds, built in an era when all wealth, education, and political power were the monopoly of a small landed and commercial aristocracy, are being swept away.

As a result of these changes, the organized urban workers, the rapidly growing professional classes, the students (who now come more and more from the lower rungs of society), the new industrialists, and even the peasantry, are now playing a part in political life. Each of these groups has concrete objectives that it is seeking to obtain through political activity. Each seeks to mold the process of change in its own way. At the same time, conservative elements remain strong and seek to resist the process of change or, at the very least, to have a measure of control over it. Finally, the whole process of social and economic transformation of Venezuela is taking place at a time when ideologies have polarized groups of countries and when no

country can be considered wholly at the margin of the clashes between these polarized groups of countries. All this created in Venezuela a fertile ground for political ideas and philosophies from abroad.

Throughout Venezuelan history, the political parties that existed have mirrored the patterns of power--at first they were the exclusive preserve of the privileged few, as they now attempt to respond to the demands of the enfranchised masses. They have shown the primacy of various interest groups at various times; they have reflected the clashes of political philosophies; and they have taken a wide variety of points of view concerning the basic issues of social and economic change. Yet, Acción Democrática has been more durable than many other parties for it, unlike the others, has based its ideology and its programs in Venezuela's foremost hero, Bolívar, at the same time that it has sought to adapt his thoughts to the demands of twentieth century Venezuela.³ This reinterpretation of Bolívar has prompted Acción Democrática to view always its role as one of attempting to overcome the legacy of Spanish rule and the long shadow of dictators that followed the trauma of independence. AD has consistently sought to reaffirm its devotion to the substance of Bolívar's thoughts as they may apply in the transformation of today's Venezuela. It is thus fitting for us to place Acción Democrática in the context of Venezuelan political party

³Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, passim.

history in order that we may better perceive the ideological trends that have existed for centuries and that have left their mark on present day Acción Democrática, as well as newer aspects of this party that may signal significant breaks with the past.

The Spanish Legacy

The Spanish colonial regime in Venezuela, as in other parts of Latin America, was a mixture of neglect that helped in the early appearance of a spirit of independence among the criollos (the sons of the Spanish colonists) and of arbitrary government that was to serve as a model for the criollo leaders once independence was achieved.⁴

The Venezuelan region was the first on the South American mainland to be explored by the Spaniards. Pearls and gold brought to Spain by Alonso Niño in 1499 enticed the first European adventurers. Settling on the Island of Cubagua, where the city of Nueva Cádiz was founded in 1523, they soon spread their explorations to the mainland and in fact abandoned the city by 1550.⁵

But this wave of Europeans soon dwindled to a trickle and the Venezuelan region became a backwater of the Spanish

⁴C. Parra Pérez, El Régimen Español en Venezuela (Madrid: Cultural Hispánica, 1964); Frank J. Moreno, "The Spanish Colonial System: A Functional Approach," Western Political Quarterly, XX (June, 1967), 308-320.

⁵Comisión de Turismo del Estado Sucre, Una Invitación a Conocer al Estado Sucre (Cumaná: Editorial Universitaria Oriente, n.d.).

colonial empire. The pearl fisheries were soon exhausted and little gold or other precious metals was found. Its soil did not lend itself to the exploitation of sugar on a large scale as did the islands of the Caribbean and the northeast coast of Brazil. Especially after the conquests of Mexico in 1519 and of Peru in 1532, with the discovery of their rich gold and silver mines, Spain practically forgot the existence of Venezuela. Its disinterest was so great that Spain "rented" the government of Venezuela to the German bankers Welsers from 1528 to 1546.⁶

Venezuela was then made a distant dependency of Santo Domingo and later, after 1550, a minor part of New Granada, now Colombia. It never attained the dignity of a viceroyalty but kept the subordinate status of captaincy general. Perhaps for this very reason, neglected by the Spanish authorities and far from the centers of colonial power, Venezuela developed a strong feeling of identity and of separateness before many other parts of the Spanish Empire. Here the mixture of Spanish, African, and Indian peoples was more thorough than in some other colonies. Further, as landholders employing slave labor, the succeeding generations of American-born criollos won considerable fortunes, forming a society not entirely dependent upon Spanish connections. Also, their distance from the great

⁶ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 157-160; J. M. Siso Martínez, Historia de Venezuela (4th ed.; Mexico: Editorial "Yocoima," 1956), pp. 43-49.

vice-regal capitals, to which the Spanish-born sought assignment, produced opportunities to avoid the more onerous controls from the mother country. At the same time, French, Dutch, and English smugglers provided an alternative to trade with the Spanish. More often than not, they also brought to the Venezuelan shores new ideas and concepts of government at variance with that of Spain. Theirs, however, was a small ideological flow when compared with the much greater influx of new ideas and experiences brought home by the sons of the criollos who had spent their formative years abroad.⁷

But Spain, in spite of its neglect and its remoteness, was to leave indelible marks on the makeup of Venezuela. Hers was the language, hers was the Church, and hers were the outlines of government as well as the major strains of white blood that were to mix with Indians and the Negroes.⁸

To encourage settlement, the Spanish governors distributed the available Indians in groups (encomiendas) to the conquistadores to work the mines and to cultivate the fertile lands of the valleys. With the establishment of towns and cities, civil government appeared in the form of town councils (cabildos). Since the mayors and councilors

⁷ Víctor Andrés Belaunde, Bolívar and the Political Thought of the Spanish American Revolution (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), especially its chaps. I-V.

⁸ See Parra Pérez, El Régimen Español en Venezuela, *passim*; Rafael Caldera, Aspectos Sociológicos de la Cultura en Venezuela (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, n.d.), especially pp. 7-12.

(alcaldes and regidores) were usually appointed by the royal representative from the Spanish settlers or on the recommendation of their descendents (criollos), the cabildo became a form of oligarchy drawn from colonial aristocracy. The cabildos did draw up and publish municipal ordinances and handled local matters of law enforcement so that the successors of the conquistadores became accustomed to a measure of local government. Writers of the nineteenth century America, in fact, praised the cabildos as democratic or semi-democratic bodies and as elected representatives of the people.⁹

Higher justice in the New World was handled by the royal tribunals (audiencias), which also partook of the functions of a council of state for the executive. Whatever the title of the chief executive of a region, he was also president of the audiencia--if one were allotted to his seat of government. All major executives were forced at the end of their appointment to account for their official conduct at a public hearing (residencia) which probed their fiscal and administrative policies and which was usually held by a senior member of the audiencia. The Crown might also, at its own initiative, send a visitador at any time to inspect the affairs of the colony. These measures of control were often nullified by the ambition and greed of the inspectors, who might accept bribes for a good report on a bad

⁹Belaunde, Bolívar and the Political Thought of the Spanish American Revolution, pp. 2-7.

administration or castigate a good one with a view of succeeding to the position. There was a similar gap between the intention of the *encomiendas*--created to protect the Indians--and their use in the colony, for the Indians were exploited both by Spaniards and *criollos*. In a similar manner, early laws ordered that governmental positions should be filled preferably by the descendants of the conquistadores, discoverers, and settlers. In spite of this, the practical policy of Spain was precisely the contrary; the *criollos* were seldom appointed to high positions such as viceroy, captain general, or judge. In this manner, *criollos* grew with the daily experience of seeing a formidable and well-intended code nullified in practice. Further, their impotence before the realities of Spanish rule and the overwhelming powers of executive Spaniards remained one of the bases of the remonstrance of the *criollos*, a factor in the wars of independence. Diffie summarizes the prevalent situation in these words:

Despite all efforts of the Crown to remedy abuses and centralize colonial government, a great divergence persisted between the intent of the laws and their execution. . . . Royal laws were further weakened by many conflicting authorities in America. Frequently it was not clear who had jurisdiction in a specified case. . . . Added to this confusion of administration, there was open corruption. The system of the *visita* and the *residencia* was not always effective, since the judges themselves might be suborned. . . . Finally, there was no real public opinion to enforce good government. Government was in the hands of a minority which had got its position through privilege or heredity. Property was a requirement for citizenship and the possession of an office was frequently regarded as an

opportunity to turn public funds into private pockets.¹⁰

In 1728 Spain formed her own trading company to which all trade with Venezuela would be allotted. The Compañía Guipuzcoana was organized, staffed, and financed principally by Basques. This economic monopoly, in which the colonists had no voice, quickly became immensely unpopular. In 1749 a spontaneous revolt against this monopoly broke out. This was finally suppressed but the extent of its popular support showed that the Venezuelan criollos were growing increasingly restive under the restrictive Spanish controls. When the Compañía Guipuzcoana failed and was liquidated in 1784, Venezuela was authorized free trade with the other Spanish possessions--the last colony to receive this privilege.

But while landowners rejoiced, some merchants protested the increased competition and decreased profits that free trade would bring them. Both groups were made more than ever aware of how completely they were at the mercy of Spain. Their increasing discontent took place at a time when a sizable portion of the British colonies in North America were successfully waging wars of independence and at a time when French philosophes were spreading their libertarian doctrines.¹¹

¹⁰ Bailey W. Diffie, Latin American Civilization; Colonial Period (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Sons, 1945), pp. 311-312

¹¹ See Charles Griffin, Los Temas Sociales y Económicos en la Época de la Independencia (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1962); Pedro A. Barbosa, "Ocaso de la Dominación Española en Venezuela," Revista de la Sociedad Bolivariana [Caracas], XXIII (October, 1964), 554-563; Hendrik Willem Van Loon, Fighters for Freedom: Jefferson and Bolívar (New York: Dodd

The First Political Party

The history of Venezuelan political parties begins with the emergence of the Patriotic Society, founded at the root of the events surrounding the 19th of April, 1810, when Venezuelans openly challenged Spanish rule. Formed as an imitation of the "clubs" that existed during the French Revolution, directly inspired by the thought of the philosophes and revolutionaries,¹² this Society constituted a center of conspiracy and political activity. There one would find the best of the Venezuelan youth in the Colony--Miranda, Bolívar, García de Seña, Coto Paúl. These men were at the forefront of those who decried the vacillation of the Congress of 1811 and who constantly asked for an immediate and clear declaration of independence.¹³

At first the Society admitted only selected members;

Mead, 1962); R. A. Humphreys and John Lynch, The Origins of the Latin American Revolutions, 1808-1826 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1954); Diffie, Latin American Civilization; Colonial Period, pp. 284-312.

¹² The philosophy of the eighteenth century did not imply the direct acceptance of revolutionary ideas. But the ideas of the philosophes, combating, as they did, tradition and authority, opened the way to revolution in France and in the United States, and by reflection, in Spain and Spanish America. In respect to Rousseau, it is evident that few--if any--other authors were so widely read in Spanish America. Rousseau was the intellectual idol of Rodríguez, the teacher of Bolívar, and some of the leading ideas of Bolívar are entirely Rousseauistic.

¹³ Or the élite intelectual de la Independencia, see Ramón Díaz Sánchez, Paisaje Histórico de la Cultura Venezolana (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1965), pp. 71-74.

later it became open to all who called themselves patriots and who were ready to challenge Spanish rule. Even a few Negroes, Indians, and women were reported as participants in the Society's secret meetings, but by and large it remained mostly made up of the criollo elite youth. If, however, it never became a truly popularly based institution, the Society was significant for having its own extensive partisan structure, its leaders, its members, and its meetings where all themes were discussed, among them strictly political questions as well as religious and military topics.

Its well-educated and upper-class nature was advantageous in that it imparted upon the Society a force, a power, prestige, and effectiveness far out of proportion to the small numbers it included as members. In its name representations were made--often with positive results--before the Congress, the Courts, and in the streets. The Society might have eventually emerged as a more widely based partisan organization, but this never came about. Its members and leaders soon left the realm of polemics and went into the battlefields to fight and to die for the independence of Venezuela.¹⁴

Because the leaders of the Society spoke and thought in terms of the absolute revolutionary and libertarian doctrines emanating from France, the discussions in the Society meetings and later the writings of its outstanding members were surprisingly modern in their tone and in the

¹⁴Manuel Vicente Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos (Caracas: Tipografía Vargas, 1960), pp. 25-32.

issues they covered. Coto Paúl was for anarchy and he called "for a blessed demagogy to revive the listless Congress."¹⁵ Muñoz Tébar, like the Society's central figure Miranda, wanted above all complete independence from Spain; once all bonds were broken, the "people" would choose the new nation's form of government.¹⁶ These and other ideas enlivened the Society meetings; but the greatest pensador of the group was destined to be Bolívar. Bolívar was to include in his writings a call for the abolition of all types of slavery; for the integration of the Indian in the social and political life of the nation; for the improvement of the living conditions in the country; for educational and agrarian reform; and for the pursuit of Pan-Americanism. For the Libertador, the greatest of the social problems was that of education. He sought to bring foreign educators to the new country and he often linked the right to vote for those who had become sophisticated enough to "understand" its significance.¹⁷ On the international level, he dreamed of a union of the American Republics and he himself held the ruling position in Gran

¹⁵ Quoted in Siso Martínez, História de Venezuela, p. 278.

¹⁶ Ibid. On the Society, see also Guillermo Morón, A History of Venezuela, trans. John Street (London: Grace Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964), pp. 103-105.

¹⁷ George I. Sánchez, The Development of Education in Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1963), pp. 6-20; Tulio Chiossone, Los Problemas Sociales en la Formación del Estado Venezolano (Caracas: Gráfica Americana, 1964), pp. 43-69.

Colombia, a complex that included present day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador.¹⁸

To achieve these domestic and international goals, Bolívar believed in the advantages inherent in an "effective government," "one that produces the maximum of felicity, of social security, and of political stability."¹⁹ This "effective government" would not only fulfill the material desires and needs of the population but would also lead this population to greater creative enterprises. Because it would fulfill the population's demands, this "effective government" would merit their support and thus it would enjoy stability. Further, it was Bolívar's contention that this "effective government" would become feasible not through complicated legalistic structures but through the will of men bent upon the daily tasks of helping and leading their fellow men.²⁰

The Trauma of Independence--Disappearance of Political Parties

Bolívar's ideals, though tempered by a great deal of political realism, were crushed by the terrifying costs of the prolonged wars of independence. Venezuela suffered more

¹⁸ Humberto Fernández Auvert, "Realizar el Ideario de Bolívar, un Deber Continental," Revista de la Sociedad Bolivariana [Caracas], XXIII (October 28, 1964), 530-539; Belaunde, Bolívar and the Political Thought of the Spanish American Revolution, pp. 259-270.

¹⁹ J. L. Salcedo-Bastardo, Visión y Revisión de Bolívar (Buenos Aires: Imprenta López, 1959), p. 113.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 109-115; José Carrillo Moreno, "Bolívar y el Nacionalismo Científico," Política, V (August, 1966), 65-73.

than any other Latin-American country. Eleven years of warfare had cost the lives of one-fourth of her entire population, among them the best educated and most capable of her youth. A great deal of the actual fighting to liberate the northern portion of the South American continent took place in Venezuela, and it was in Carabobo, just west of Caracas, that in June, 1821, the Spanish resistance was decisively broken.²¹

The Venezuelan social structure, furthermore, had been rent by class warfare which the mother country had encouraged as a desperate attempt to wreck the Venezuelan independence movement.²² Her economy had been ruined in the fighting. Caracas lay prostrated by the formidable 1812 earthquake. All this combined with the general anarchy to bring normal civil government to a condition of collapse. Spanish colonialism, sometimes harsh, sometimes paternalistic, was exchanged after independence in 1821 for the even less restrained absolutism of local caudillos and for a long

²¹ Ramón Díaz Sánchez, "Carabobo, Marco para una Victoriosa Agonía," Revista de la Sociedad Bolivariana [Caracas], XXIII (October 28, 1964), 595-612.

²² The Asturian, José Tomás Boves, was extremely successful for a time in gaining the allegiance of lower class Venezuelans against the patriotic but aristocratic leaders of the Independence. His soldiers were specially recruited from the mestizo horsemen of the Llanos and other lower classes. He freed slaves, promoted mestizos to high military ranks and imbued them with a spirit of blind vengeance against white, well educated, or aristocratic Venezuelans. See Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 118-120; Siso Martínez, Historia de Venezuela, pp. 324-336.

chronicle of the personal rule of dictators, during which little political, social, or economic development took place.

Bolívar's ideal for a Republic of Gran Colombia was soon challenged by regionalistic tendencies, personal rivalries among his lieutenants, and difficulty of communication and control in this far-flung territory. Basically an idealist, Bolívar refused to assume dictatorial powers that might have kept Gran Colombia together. Finally, when he acceded in August of 1828, it was too late. Regional chieftains could no longer be successfully challenged and the Liberator's dreams of viable government for the expansive Gran Colombia Republic were shattered. Shortly after, in 1830, Bolívar died. A long parade of dictators was to follow him.²³

During the approximately 20 years that the wars of independence lasted, nothing in Venezuela existed that could be considered a true political party. In the early decades after independence, the veteran military officers constituted a closely knit but not too well-organized pressure group in the modern technical sense. Their sole basic agreement lay in their feeling that "they had created the Venezuelan state, and therefore they should lead and control it."²⁴

²³ Augusto Mijares, "La Evolución Política de Venezuela (1810-1960)," in Mariano Picón-Salas et al., Venezuela Independiente, 1810-1960 (Caracas: Fundación Eugenio Mendoza, 1962), pp. 23-156.

²⁴ Robert L. Gilmore, Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, 1810-1910 (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1964), p. 11.

After the separation from Gran Colombia, José Antonio Páez governed with the support of the conservative oligarchy. In 1831 he was elected the new Republic's first president. For the next 18 years no actual political opposition appeared. Páez was either president or, because of his control of the army, the power behind Soublette, with whom he alternated in the presidential chair.

The Venezuelan Constitution of 1830 was drawn up by men of property and the professions. A modest property qualification for the voter and a substantial one for the holders of political office was introduced. "Political crimes," vaguely defined, could be punished by death. The Church was shorn of many of its special powers and privileges. The Constitution's conventional provisions for executive, legislative, and judicial branches were only lightly observed. In practice, the distribution of power was invariably and heavily weighted in favor of the executive.²⁵

From Páez until the appearance of Juan Vicente Gómez in 1908, one properly speaks of the era of caudillism, a time when the person and ambition of the caudillo, around whom power revolved, were preeminent in the national theater. The era of caudillism was associated with an overwhelmingly agricultural as well as ranching and extractive economy,

²⁵The most complete work on the Venezuelan constitutions remains Gil Portoual, História Constitucional de Venezuela. For this early period, see its Vol. II.

complemented by a foreign-trade oriented financial and commercial sector. The classes of this strongly manorial and pastoral society were related to such contrasting elements as market and subsistence parts of the economy, the ruling groups and the governed, the educated and the uneducated. Although the correspondence was not wholly exact, the upper and middle sectors of society were identified with the market economy, the ruling groups, the educated. They possessed social and political authority in Venezuela. The remainder of the population was generally illiterate, denied a direct political role, and tied to a subsistence economy. Often political violence, impunity for crime, and the pervasive awareness of race and class tensions contributed greatly to the continuing social disorder in the nation. The Spanish authorities were no longer around--but nothing emerged to take their place except the feuding caudillo militias. Venezuelan pressure and interest groups, such as they were, provided no stabilizing framework in the society during the caudillo era.²⁶

Independence had dissolved the special jurisdictions (fueros) which had given the pressure and interest groups consistency, place, and function in colonial society. The Church had lost many of its privileges and powers, including tithing rights, tax immunities, and the monopoly of education. The veterans of the wars of independence were kept in close

²⁶ Gilmore, Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, pp. 19-20.

check by the caudillo of the day who feared--probably with reason--that they were his most portentous rivals. The eroding trauma of independence had obliterated the beginnings of political organization; it was left for the caudillo to spawn and subvert a series of pseudo political parties in the decades that followed separation from Spain and the emergence of Venezuela from the breakup of Gran Colombia. No political party, in its modern sense, was destined to appear in Venezuela until the second quarter of the twentieth century.²⁷

Traditional Parties in the Era of the Caudillos

Between the time of Páez and the emergence of Gómez as the undisputed national caudillo in 1908, Venezuela saw the emergence of several political groupings that could be placed under the general category of "traditional parties" for the sake of convenience as well as to differentiate them from the full-fledged "modern political parties" that began to flourish after the death of Gómez in 1935. Several things make these two categories distinct from each other--differences in national scope, in ideological inclination, in membership, in organization, and in ability to survive beyond the electoral campaigns. These differences become quite apparent in the following survey.

Páez was the supreme leader after 1830 on the basis

²⁷ Augusto Mijares, "La Venezuela Marginal," El Nacional (April 10, 1966), p. A-4.

of his unrivalled prestige among the fierce llaneros,²⁸ his military record, and his leadership in the secession of Venezuela from Gran Colombia. There was almost no element to oppose him. High society in Caracas and the provinces was badly depleted by the wars for Independence to which it had contributed most of its youth. The llaneros inspired a degree of social panic on the basis of their past record--it was difficult to forget that before they supported Páez and the independence movement, they had supported Spaniards and had impaled many of Bolívar's soldiers on their lances. A strong military force was regarded as no better than the llaneros; besides, Páez was intent that no such force emerge and threaten his own following. Furthermore, the few prominent Caraqueños who had survived longed for peace--a peace and tranquility that only the llaneros could promise. Out of mutual need, the old and the new orders of leadership, landed aristocracy and Páez militia, were drawn together into a working alliance that lasted until 1846.²⁹

Around 1840 two tendencies appeared in the civilian

²⁸ Llanero, an inhabitant of Venezuela's central plains or Llanos. In this region, local chieftains emerged with their amorphous but fanatical followers. With a minimum of education but great valor in battle, many of them distinguished themselves in the wars of independence, thus attaining national notoriety. Páez, brave and largely self-taught, was destined to be considered by many historians one of the best presidents of the country. See William D. and Amy L. Marsland, Venezuela Through its History (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1954), pp. 152-188; José Antonio Páez, Autobiografía (2 vols.; New York: H. R. Elliott & Co., 1946).

²⁹ Gilmore, Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, pp. 73-77.

oligarchy that supported Páez. One advocated the introduction of "new men" in the handling of political affairs and reserved for itself the name of Liberal Party; the other, favoring the status quo, came to be known as Conservative Party, also sometimes referred to as the "Godo" Party.³⁰ The Conservatives, primarily concerned with opposing the Liberals rather than presenting any original programs of their own, never attained the prestige or the popular support of their rivals. Conservatives were the commercial men of Caracas and the provincial capitals, the large hacendados (farmers), some of the aristocratic groups that had supported Páez. The Liberals claimed the allegiance of the professionals and a popular following that had formed around Antonio Leocádio Guzmán, of the periodical El Venezolano. The Liberals had a greater popular following than the Conservatives, though neither group ever became the focus for pressure from the Venezuelan lower classes, being, as they were, almost exclusive creatures of the Venezuelan elite, especially in Caracas. In fact, the two denominations "conservatives" and "liberals" existed only to designate two personalistic groups that struggled for power.³¹

³⁰Godo is usually taken as a pejorative term, though at times simply indicating one's affiliation with the Conservative Party and later with the Constitutional or Centralist Party. Godos originally had been those who had sided with or helped the Spaniards during the war of Independence.

³¹Mijares, in Picón-Salas et al., Venezuela Independiente, pp. 67-98.

The Liberals, formed as a more formalized political group in 1840, were quite skillful in handling the discontent that grew within the small clique that surrounded Páez. Denial of public office to veteran officers of the army of independence, the unyielding grip of Páez and his entourage on public office and policy, the unsuccessful efforts of the Caracas aristocracy to win political independency from Páez, and the recurrent discontent of the ambitious and the intellectuals helped the Liberal Party to appear as the focus for all opposition. In the meantime, El Venezolano became an effective periodical for the dissemination of the party's propaganda.

A Conservative's reaction to the rise of the Liberals, their propaganda, and the impact of their doctrine is well summarized by a contemporary:

With the doctrine of El Venezolano the harmony between the hacendados with their peons disappeared as well as the concord between the proprietors and their tenants, arousing insatiable hopes of sudden fortunes, ambitions that could not easily be satisfied, and claiming rights they said were usurped by those who helped maintain order and justice. . . . [It] confounded the beliefs of those simple men . . . infusing them with the idea that rebellion against those leading them along the way of morality and work would improve their condition and the state of their families. They would acquire full right to the lands they rented and full possession and enjoyment of privileges and prerogatives.³²

Guzmán, the editor of El Venezolano was accused of preaching social revolution, of "declaring the proprietor a tyrant over the lazy and the vagrant; of calling on these to destroy

³²Quoted in Gilmore, Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, p. 81.

the Republic and in exchange for their votes offering them wealth and social position."³³

Yet, once in power, from 1848 to 1890, the Liberals did little, if anything, to live up to their promises or to the fears they had aroused among the hacendados. A compromise between the oligarchy and the new masters of Venezuela took place. The spoils of the victory, made possible largely by the popular appeal of the Liberal program, were shared between the oligarchy and the Liberals. The Liberal program itself was easily forgotten for the convenience of the few who counted; the majority of the people who had been taken in by the Liberal promises became ever more miserable and impotent to challenge the government.

The so-called Liberal Era was anything but what its label might imply. A succession of military dictators vied with each other in corruption and treasury-raiding. From 1848 to 1858 the Monagas brothers alternated in the presidency. Their regime was notorious for many things but noteworthy for only one, the emancipation of the slaves. First suggested by Bolívar in 1819, it was finally carried out in 1854.

By 1858 two new groupings had become more formally organized. The Constitutional Party backed the government and its membership was made up mainly of bureaucrats. Its

³³Juan Vicente González, in Ramón J. Velázquez (ed.), Pensamiento Político Venezolano del Siglo XIX, III (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1961), 114-115.

adversaries classified it as "godo," oligarchical, conservative, central, or centralist. Those opposed to the government called themselves Federalists.

The Federalist Party was actually a variation or extension of the old Liberal Party. It was founded by a group of exiles, among them Antonio Leocádio Guzmán and Antonio Guzmán Blanco. Their programa de gobierno included freedom of the press, universal suffrage, secret and direct election of all legislators, popular election of justices, and restrictions of a permanent army for the sole purpose of external war. In the words of Magallanes,

With the Federalists . . . the revolutionary movement in Venezuela appeared more impetuous and widespread than ever before. . . . The Federation was an episode in the continuous process of democratic struggle, a process that had shown itself clearly during the wars of Independence and that renewed its power once more in the liberal movement in spite of the conservatives.³⁴

This highly favorable estimate of the Federalists is not shared by many. More generally, it is felt that the Federalists and the Centralists were both far more interested in enjoying the profits inherent in being the party in power rather than in fulfilling their vague and grandiose programs. There is no argument, however, over the fact that the struggle between Federalists and Centralists once more drained Venezuela of much of her most promising youth and caused severe social and economic disruptions.³⁵

³⁴Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 44-45.

³⁵Díaz Sánchez, in Picón-Salas et al., Venezuela Independiente, pp. 245-255; Mijares, in ibid., pp. 111-125.

The Federalists achieved victory in 1863. The next three decades followed the familiar pattern of Venezuelan politics--rule by dictators who gathered enough support to keep themselves in power for a time, who paid lip service to high-sounding constitutions, but who were mostly concerned with benefitting themselves to the utmost. Eventually this corruption alienated enough of those who either wished to benefit themselves from the national treasury or who maintained a devotion for a better type of government to overthrow the current ruler and set themselves in power. The cycle repeated itself.

The first of these dictators was General Juan Falcón, who gave lip service to the Liberal program and who proclaimed a new Constitution that guaranteed universal suffrage, greater autonomy for local governments, and freedom of the press. But since political opposition was suppressed, universal suffrage meant only the right to vote for government candidates. Greater local autonomy in effect made each local caudillo supreme in his area. Meanwhile the new administration proceeded to loot the Treasury. By 1868 conditions deteriorated so much that one group of disgusted Venezuelans proposed giving the country in trust to England.

The Falcón government was overthrown by a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives. General Guzmán Blanco emerged as the new military dictator in 1870 and was to control Venezuela for the next 18 years. An avowed Liberal, Guzmán Blanco has been the subject of either unmitigated diatribe or eulogy: for his political friends and later for his admirers,

there were never enough adjectives to use in his praise. His adversaries found all deprecations too mild to affront him strongly enough.³⁶ Uslar Pietri gives a more balanced appraisal when he tells us that Guzmán Blanco

is a man in whom a variety of the features of the caudillo phenomenon is combined with a kind of reflexive moderation. He is primarily an academic civilian who, to further personal plans, becomes a militarist. He is a man of culture, enamored of some liberal ideas, whose action reflects an obvious wish to contribute to the nation's progress. His hardness is calculated and his cruelty more ostentatious than effective. Along with his greed appears his undeniable ability as an administrator. All this makes his personality more complex and analysis of it more difficult.³⁷

Like most of his predecessors, Guzmán Blanco amassed a fortune; but while enriching himself, he did demand honesty and efficiency in his government personnel. He pacified the country, restored its credit, and proclaimed many reforms. Hostile to the Church, he virtually destroyed its remaining power in Venezuela. The archbishop was exiled, church properties were confiscated, and ecclesiastical privileges ceased to exist.³⁸ Ruling the states through subservient

³⁶For a balanced characterization of Guzmán Blanco, see George S. Wise, Caudillo: A Portrait of Antonio Guzmán Blanco (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).

³⁷Arturo Uslar Pietri in Wise, Caudillo, p. vi.

³⁸J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America (2d ed. rev.; Chapel Hill, No. Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 106-109; Mary Watters, A History of the Church in Venezuela, 1810-1930 (Chapel Hill, No. Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), *passim*; Mary Watters, "The Present Status of the Church in Venezuela," Hispanic American Historic Review, XIII (February, 1933), 30-41. Pages 34-38 of her article deal specifically with the Guzmán Blanco period.

appointees, he effectively negated the autonomy granted by the Federalist Constitution. He carefully suppressed all opposition, but his frequent trips to Europe and his growing lack of contact with the centers of power in Venezuela eventually proved his undoing. His own picked candidate turned against him and in 1888 Guzmán Blanco became an exile.³⁹

A society under the name of Democratic Union was founded in May of 1889 and began publishing a periodical called The Democratic Party (El Partido Democrático). Besides the usual generalities common to all previous political organizations in Venezuela, the society's program called for the adoption of the homestead plan and for proportional representation.

The Democratic Union made a noticeable impact in its beginnings, perhaps because of the great enthusiasm of its leaders as well as the support of well-known writers and politicians of the time. Its influence, however, diminished greatly after the election of candidates who had supported portions of its program. The elections over, the society dissolved itself. Its members and sympathizers either abandoned the political struggle or became participants in the government. The Democratic Union never became a political

³⁹On Guzmán and the Liberals, see also Ramón Díaz Sánchez, Guzmán, Eclipse de una Ambición de Poder (Caracas: Editorial Edime, 1952); Francisco González Guinán, História Contemporanea de Venezuela, Vols. VIII-XI (Caracas, 1909).

party; in fact, its own program carried this declaration: "The members of this society . . . consider it contrary to human dignity . . . that a citizen drown his personality in the collectivity of a party."⁴⁰

Two civilian presidents followed the overthrow of Guzmán Blanco and then the pattern of military dictatorship was resumed with General Joaquín Crespo. Personally honest, Crespo made an inept president. He permitted corrupt advisers to raid the Treasury and contract ruinous loans. His term came to an end in 1898 and, in the fight over the election of his successor, he was killed.

Meanwhile, a surge of political activity unparalleled in Venezuelan history was taking place. The Republican-Federal Party was founded in 1893 and adopted a program very similar to the old Democratic Union. Like the Democratic Union, however, it had a very short existence. That same year, another group, made up mostly of former supporters of Guzmán Blanco, called for the reunification of the Liberal Party under the leadership of General Crespo.

As elections approached, the Liberal Nationalist Party was founded in 1897 to promote the candidacy of General José Manuel Henríquez, better known as El Mocho. This party and its candidate marked an entirely new approach in Venezuelan politics. Born in a Caracas slum, El Mocho undertook an extensive political campaign. For the first time, a

⁴⁰Quoted in Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 48-49.

presidential candidate, instead of confining himself to conferring with caudillos in Caracas, traveled throughout the country and held innumerable public meetings. Everywhere he was acclaimed a truly popular leader and there is little doubt that about nine-tenths of the population became his followers.⁴¹

It is certain that El Mocho won the elections but, following the traditional pattern, the government declared its own candidate president. The Liberal Nationalists, certain of their popular strength, decided to fight for their candidate. Even though President Crespo died, the Liberal Nationalists lost. General Cipriano Castro came to power and initiated one of the most corrupt governments Venezuela has ever known. Political parties ceased to exist. Only factions with ambitious chieftains remained and these were easily controlled through threats and bribery. The sole voice of opposition came from the writings of Pedro María Morantes, better known as Pío Gil. From the safety of exile, Pío Gil succeeded in introducing into the country his political tracts, denouncing the corruption and challenging the regime.⁴²

Cipriano Castro had assumed the presidency, but the fighting did not end for two years, while regional caudillos

⁴¹Mijares, in Picón-Salas et al., Venezuela Independiente, pp. 144-146.

⁴²His novela El Cabito is considered one of the best descriptions of the Venezuelan society during Castro's regime. See José Carrillo Moreno, Pío Gil (Caracas: Biblioteca "Rocinante," 1955).

contested his rule. Finally, with the aid of his Tachirenses supporter Juan Vicente Gómez, Castro vanquished all opposition in a vigorous campaign. Venezuela sank under the dictatorship of a supreme egotist, who held Venezuela as a prize to be exploited for his personal benefit and who involved the country in discreditable and costly "nationalistic" squabbles with the foreign powers--mostly through the mistreatment of foreign businessmen and diplomats.⁴³

Cipriano Castro's dissipation forced him to seek a cure for ill health abroad and he left for Europe in 1908, leaving his vice-president, Gómez, in charge. Though Gómez had been loyal to Castro for many years, he realized this was his chance to take power and within a month he assumed the presidency. The next three decades engulfed Venezuela in the longest dictatorship it had ever experienced. Uniquely adept in the control of power and in the subjugation of all Venezuelans, Gómez was to see only minor opposition during his lifetime, the most important of which comes as late as 1928. Only after his death in 1935 do we find the first serious and more lasting attempts at the formation of political parties.⁴⁴

⁴³Mariano Picón-Salas, Los Días de Cipriano Castro (Caracas, 1953), exalts Castro's "nationalism" at the same time that it points out his many personal weaknesses.

⁴⁴For an official, and therefore highly favorable collection of documents (speeches, congressional messages, correspondence, etc.), see Luis Correa, El General J. V. Gómez. Documentos para la Historia de su Gobierno (Caracas: Litografía del Comercio, 1925). For equally unbalanced views of Gómez (in this case, entirely negative), see Thomas Rourke, Gómez, Tyrant of the Andes (Garden City, N.Y.:

Gómez ruled by a combination of energy, cunning, and ruthlessness. He put his many relatives and Táchira supporters in most of the key posts but these too were known to die or disappear under mysterious circumstances if they crossed the dictator's will. Gómez' first concern was the army and, after he had shifted the top commanders to suit himself, he reorganized, modernized, and expanded his armed forces so that no would-be revolutionary dared to challenge him. He began the professionalization of the military by establishing a military academy and by bringing in experts from abroad. To facilitate military operations he opened a system of roads that could carry his troops to quell insurrections wherever they occurred. An efficient spy system was developed and covered all branches of the government, including the military and the foreign service. Incipient opposition to his regime was promptly checked by arrest, imprisonment, and torture. Whenever it suited his wishes, the Constitution was either rewritten or amended and thus he could always boast that his government was legally justified in its various moves.⁴⁵ By censorship,

Halcyon House, 1936), and José Rafael Pocaterra, Gómez, The Shame of America (Paris: André Delpeuch, 1929). More balanced accounts are John Lavin's A Halo for Gómez (New York: Pageant Press, 1954), and the anonymous "Juan Vicente Gómez, Un Fenómeno Telúrico," Signo [Caracas] (October 4, 1951), pp. 9-15. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz' Cesarismo Democrático (3d ed.; Caracas: Garrido, 1952), sought to explain (as well as praise) the concept of the "necessary strongmen"--such as Guzmán Blanco and Gómez--through social theory. Pedro Manuel Arcaya, wrote The Gómez Regime in Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Sun Printing Co., 1936), also praising El Benemérito and explaining his actions in sociological terms.

⁴⁵A. Arellano Moreno, "Las Siete Reformas Constitucionales del General Juan Vicente Gómez," Política, III (September, 1963), 31-72.

propoganda, and the forcible pacification of the people, Gómez made Venezuela appear peaceful and progressive both at home and abroad.⁴⁶

Gómez could, indeed, claim to be quite an improvement over the chaotic Cipriano Castro regime. The financial conditions which he fostered did much to restore economic prosperity in the country and present an attractive field for foreign investments. Gómez scrupulously paid all foreign and internal debts; he kept Venezuela's currency hard. When he died in 1935, the country had a surplus of nearly 100 million bolívars.

It was Gómez who, in the early years of the twentieth century, welcomed the oil prospectors who were to make Venezuela a very rich country and Gómez the richest Venezuelan.⁴⁷ The profits served to pay off the country's foreign debts as well to enrich the dictator and his friends. But those outside the small clique of presidential favorites gained little--if anything--from the millions that poured into Venezuela from the 1920's on. The Marslands explain the Gómez technique thus:

Gómez . . . shared the good things with his supporters, one of the reasons why he stayed in power so long. . . . All positions carried with them the tacit right to pilfer funds from the public pocket. . . . Army

⁴⁶ See Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, chaps. XV through XXVII.

⁴⁷ An account of the discovery, exploration, and some of the political consequences of oil is Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela: A History, passim.

commanders absorbed salaries of "imaginary" soldiers. Civil officials owned stock in contracting companies which won public works contracts. Kickbacks, taxes, bonuses, and direct raids on the Treasury added to the staggering total the Gomécists stole.⁴⁸

Petroleum changed the economy from one primarily agricultural and pastoral, producing most of its own food and other basic needs, to an economy which after 1920 was dominated by the extraction of oil.⁴⁹ Prices rose and agricultural production by small farmers fell off as high wages offered by foreign companies drew people to the oil-fields and the cities. The large estates produced mostly export crops such as cacao and coffee. Venezuela began to import food in ever increasing quantities. Little of the new wealth was expended on education, health, diversification of agriculture, or the establishment of local industries. The new money made the Gómez machinery ever more efficient in its repressive tactics. A number of attempts at uprisings and invasion by those who were lucky enough to escape the government's vigilance came to a complete and swift failure and cost the lives of those involved. The dictator with his network of spies and his modern and loyal army was more than a match for all opposition.

Thus in 1935--over a century after independence had been achieved--Venezuela still had not developed

⁴⁸ Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, p. 236.

⁴⁹ "Petroleum Transforms Venezuela into an Industrial Power," Now York Times (May 26, 1963), sec. 12, pp. 14-15; James, Latin America, pp. 93-96.

anything resembling a modern, integrative, well organized, programmatic rather than personalistic political party. The seeds for such a party had been sown during the Gómez era by the rising labor elements, the emerging middle sectors, and the discontented students; by changing values and new ideas; by the erosion of the old traditional society. The seeds had been sown during the Gómez era--but a modern political party did not emerge for another decade.

Venezuelan Students Federation--Seedbed of Modern Political Parties

If, on the one hand, the revenues from petroleum helped Gómez to perfect and to reinforce his machinery for the repression of political opposition, they also undermined the status quo by giving birth to a proletariat of skilled workers who were to become ever more conscious of their crucial position in the tapping of the mineral riches. Petroleum also was to attract skilled workers from other lands, often workers who had long been exposed to the ideas of syndicalism, anarchism, socialism and communism.⁵⁰ To add to the unprecedented influx of revolutionary ideas from abroad, the Venezuelan students were becoming aware of successful student movements elsewhere in the American continent.

This atmosphere contributed to the uprising of

⁵⁰ Robert J. Alexander, Communism in Latin America (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), pp. 253-255; Partido Comunista Venezolano, La Vida Revolucionaria de Gustavo Machado (Caracas: E.T.C.A., 1946).

greatest importance during the long Gómez dictatorship and the one destined to have a lasting impact on Venezuelan politics.⁵¹ The student revolt of 1928 had its origins in the formation, in 1927, of the Venezuelan Students Federation (FEV), an organization that reflected the students' awareness of the revolutionary ideas of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 and of the Russian Revolution of 1917.⁵² These students were also painfully aware that students elsewhere in Latin America had already shown an independence of mind and of action that they hitherto had failed to demonstrate effectively.⁵³ Students in Argentina, in Peru, in Chile had risen and had demanded academic reforms which had been granted sometimes after violent strikes. Attempts at student organization with similar aims in Venezuela failed in 1914, 1918 and 1922 because Gómez suppressed them at once. The FEV was not a political party--that would not have been allowed by Gómez--

⁵¹ See John D. Martz, "The Generation of '28: Genesis of Venezuelan Democracy," Journal of Inter-American Studies, VI (January, 1964), 17-33.

⁵² Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela, p. 1. There are Venezuelans who feel the Mexican Revolution was strictly a national affair and did not have any impact outside of Mexico. See "El Dr. Escobar Salom Habló in la Mendoza Sobre los Cambios en América Latina," El Nacional (March 7, 1965), p. D-3. Dr. Salom was Venezuelan Minister of Justice at the time of this article.

⁵³ Jóvito Villalba, "La Federación de Estudiantes y la Reforma Universitaria en Venezuela," in La Reforma Universitaria, III [La Plata, Argentina] (1941), pp. 260-264; Rómulo Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956), pp. 67-70.

but in practice it acted as one. Among its leaders was Pío Tamayo, who, with heterogeneous political ideas allied with a youthful fervor, would become the first theoretician of the group. He, along with Jóvito Villalba and Rómulo Betancourt, made the leading speeches of the Students Week celebrated in February of 1928, speeches that were open challenges to the oppression and brutality of the Gómez regime.

Betancourt, years later, would describe the events thus--

In Venezuela reigned an atmosphere of oppression and collective apprehensions. It was in this atmosphere . . . that the generation of the 1928 acted. . . . The winds of change that tossed the world were finally reaching us, winds that reflected the disrupting historical episode of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the social changes that had taken place in Western Europe at the conclusion of World War I. The news of the Mexican Revolution, then in its highest resonance in America, came to us as a powerful stimulant. In some magazines we would read . . . the news of the university upheavals in Córdoba [Argentina], the street demonstrations in Lima, the energetic beginnings of the struggle that would eventually free Cuba. . . . It was under the influx of this insurgent restlessness that moved the rest of American youth that we decided to organize the Student Week.⁵⁴

Gómez retaliated at once. The most important leaders were imprisoned, among them Betancourt, Villalba, Tamayo, Guillermo Prince Lara. The latter two were destined to die in prison or from bad treatment.

To the surprise of everyone, other university students--

⁵⁴Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 67.

many of them from Venezuela's "first families"--protested the jailing of the four leaders and hundreds filled the streets to demonstrate and were likewise jailed. The people incensed by the high-handed tactics of the government rose spontaneously in an unexpected gesture of solidarity. A general strike was called, an unprecedented challenge to the government in a country that did not even have the rudiments of a trade union movement.⁵⁵ This massive popular pressure provoked another unprecedented reaction--the doors of the jail were opened. By this time, another unique event took place--a number of young officers joined the student movement.

The freed students left jail more intent than ever to struggle against Gómez. On the evening of April 7, 1928, in connivance with those young officers, the presidential palace was taken over. But Gómez, as usual, was at his estate in Maracay, outside of Caracas. The insurgents next tried to take over the San Carlos base, where a rich arsenal was kept. They were soon overcome by the fire of the troops, the majority of which had remained loyal to Gómez.⁵⁶ This effectively

⁵⁵ Even Lavin, who is far from being extremely critical of Gómez, admits that "despite all his high-sounding propaganda to the contrary, Gómez did almost nothing to better the lot of the common working man and his children. With the exception of the 'Confederation of Workers and Artisans of the Federal District,' workers' unions were not permitted. The 'Confederation' . . . was in reality a social organization whose president was a loyal Gomecista." See Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, p. 144.

⁵⁶ The troops, after all, had long been pampered by Gómez, who was the first Venezuelan President to give them a professional status.

crushed the revolt. A student strike was called but Gómez closed the university, rounded up the students and sent them under guard to build roads in unhealthy, malarial regions, most of them paying with their lives for their daring. As Gómez declared in the official daily El Nuevo Diario, "Since they did not want to study, I'm teaching them to work."⁵⁷ Other insurgents were given indefinite prison sentences and died within a short time. For others, like Betancourt, it was possible to elude the police and leave the country.⁵⁸

At this stage, both the imprisoned and the exiled did not have a deep doctrinaire or ideological orientation. They were simply infused by youthful fervor and a desire to imitate other university students who had risen elsewhere to protest against governmental oppression. Betancourt confesses that nihilism appealed to him and his companions the most. In his words, "we did not feel historically compelled to sacrifice ourselves for the country's liberation. . . . We were a bunch of wild Jacobins in a world in which two currents were polarizing themselves into two irreconcilable fronts--antihistorical reaction and social revolution."⁵⁹

⁵⁷Quoted in Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 68.

⁵⁸The various fates of the student leaders are vividly described in a semi-autobiographical novel by Miguel Otero Silva, Fiebre; Novela de la Revolución Venezolana (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1961). Otero Silva was among the insurgents, many of whom, like him, belonged to distinguished Venezuelan families. Still one of the major novelists of his country, Otero Silva has often admitted links with the Communist Party.

⁵⁹Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 68-69.

Yet, even if the events promoted by the Students Federation lacked any devotion to doctrinaire principles beyond a desire for free expression and a wish to challenge the governmental authority for its cruel arbitrariness, they marked the first political adventure in the lives of a number who were destined to appear, years later, as the leaders of Venezuelan political parties. Among the members of the FEV who participated in the Student Week were Betancourt and Raúl Leoni, later presidents of the country; Jóvito Villalba, to be the leader of the Republican National Union (URD), for a time the second largest party in Venezuela; Gustavo Machado, to be the leader of the Venezuelan Communists, and countless others of later prominence--Gonzalo Barrios, a probable 1968 presidential candidate; Ruiz Pineda, leader of the early resistance against the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship; Otero Silva, Gabaldón Marques, Raúl Montilla, to name only a few.

Further, there is little doubt that the insurrections of 1928 marked a new dawn and a new goal for the democratic struggle in Venezuela. For the first time in the country's history, the people became a decisive factor in the events that moved the nation. The frustrated attempt at a popular movement by El Mocho at the end of the nineteenth century had left little noticeable impact.⁶⁰ In contrast, the FEV was

⁶⁰ See "El Mocho Hernández y las Reformas de 1904," Boletín del Archivo Histórico de Miraflores [Caracas], V (July-December, 1963), 195-230.

destined to become the seedbed of most of the contemporary Venezuelan political parties. In the words of Juan Oropeza,

1928 becomes the crucial year in the life of the nation. . . . The spontaneous strikes were a protest against the mass imprisonment of the students; more than that, they were a protest against the continuous arbitrariness and brutality of the dictatorship. . . . A new generation, born in a climate of dictatorship, had reached its age of reason and began asking questions for which Venezuela, long surrounded by a wall or censorship, could find no answers.⁶¹

Revolutionary Left Group

The students who were lucky enough to escape Venezuela and Gómez' reaction to the 1928 events settled mainly in Aruba, in Curaçao, in Colombia, and in Costa Rica. The most active group settled in Colombia and from there began to contact other exiles and to promote the formation of a revolutionary group devoted to the study of Venezuelan problems and to the overthrow of Gómez.

Their discussions allegedly prompted them to write the Barranquilla Plan that came to be considered by the Venezuelan authorities as the best proof that its authors were "radical Marxists." Seen in today's light, the Plan was indeed radical for the Venezuela of 1931; but it was not necessarily an expression of "radical Marxism."

The Plan, put forward by the Agrupación Revolucionaria de Izquierdas (ARDI, Revolutionary Left Group), called for the revision of oil contracts and concessions, for the

⁶¹Quoted in Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 67-68.

reduction of foreign debts, for the nationalization of water falls, for State or municipal control over public utilities. It recommended the convocation of a Constitutional Assembly to elect a provisional government, reform the constitution, revise the existent laws, and seek solutions for the political, social and economic problems. A "truly structural revolution in Venezuela" was the Plan's key goal.

At the bottom of the Plan, added in longhand, was this promise: "Those who subscribe to this Plan promise to fight for the ideas outlined here and to become active militants in the political party that will be organized on its basis." It was reportedly signed by Betancourt, Valmore Rodríguez, Raúl Lecni, and Ricardo Montilla, among others.⁶²

Venezuelan Revolutionary Organization (ORVE)

Aside from the efforts of the FEV and later of the ARDI, no other attempts of similar consequence occurred for

⁶²There is much controversy about the authenticity of the Plan. Magallanes seems certain of its existence and its authenticity, though he is obviously partial for the Plan's proposals: Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 69-71. Critical of it, for its "Marxist radicalism" is Eleazar López Contreras' El Triunfo de la Verdad (Mexico: Ediciones Genio Latino, 1949), passim. Ramón David León, in Por donde Vamos: Historia de un Peto Político (Caracas: Tipografía Garrido, 1938), pp. 29-35, also ascribes a series of letters from Betancourt to Valmore Rodríguez, both of the FEV, urging a revolution in Venezuela. Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela, p. 2, questions the authenticity of the Plan. Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, passim, concurs in this opinion, though he admits having entertained some of the ideas proposed by the Plan.

the rest of the Gómez administration. Only the dictator's death from natural causes on December 17, 1935 brought an end to the regime.

The reaction to the death of Gómez was at first one of incredulity--for too many who had long suffered under his rule the old Tachirenses seemed immortal. Incredulity was followed by a sense of relief and thanksgiving when it became clear that the tyrant's death was no wishful rumor. However, as the news spread that Gómez had indeed died, the sense of relief turned into popular uprising. Mobs attacked many Gómez supporters; their properties were looted and a few, unable to flee from the wrath of the populace, were massacred. Oil companies and their foreign employees came under attack. The wild public demonstrations went on for a time without any check; there was even speculation that they would lead to a social upheaval similar to Mexico's after Porfirio Díaz was ousted.

What might have become a popular revolution failed to develop as such, however. The people had no organizations or leaders to defend their interests and the army, under the control of Gómez' appointees, continued to be the best integrated--and armed--institution.⁶³ The oligarchy for so long associated with the dictator--the generals, the large landholders, the oil speculators, the gomecista congressmen and governors--moved to preserve the order. The Cabinet

⁶³Gilmore, Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, p. 13.

quickly appointed Gómez' minister of war General López Contreras to act as President. This choice was confirmed less than two weeks later and at the end of 1935 the Congress elected Eleazar López Contreras acting president.

López Contreras proved to be a shrewd politician. His relative moderation and conciliatory spirit in dealing with the anti-government opposition during the 1928 events had not been forgotten. Furthermore, he had discreetly maintained contact with some of the exile groups. All this would be particularly helpful in López Contreras' gaining popular support while Gómez' many relatives, especially the cruel cousin Eustoquio, governor of Lara State, were feared by the population as well as distrusted by the emerging military professionals.⁶⁴

The acting president released many of the political prisoners and invited the exiles to return to Venezuela; he removed the most hated gomecistas from the governmental payroll. He acceded to students' demands for an end to censorship and he followed this act with a liberal labor law. In April Congress elected him a full-fledged president. López Contreras' efforts to stave off the demands of the Gómez relatives and to gain his own supporters had paid off. Further, the wild, popular demonstrations of December had

⁶⁴Rodolfo Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas: 1928-1963 (Caracas: Editorial Sucre, 1963), pp. 37-39; Henry J. Allen, Venezuela, a Democracy (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1940), pp. V-XV, 1-30. The latter is an interesting, though journalistic appraisal of the López Contreras government from 1936 to 1939.

left the propertied interests fearful and shaken. It might have appeared to them that the best and perhaps only choice was to support López Contreras, who was of humble origins but predictably able to enforce order because of his military following.

The returning exiles found that Venezuela had changed a great deal since their departure in 1928. The country was no longer predominantly agricultural; instead, oil was now the major and almost sole source of governmental revenue. A proletariat, born or expanded during the oil era, had emerged especially in the cities. The population itself had become aware of its own potential power and the relatively successful uprisings following Gómez' death had only whetted the popular appetite for more power.⁶⁵

The exiles themselves had changed from romantics into realists. Most of them, after a short idyll with Marxism, had become convinced that no extraneous and rigid doctrine could redeem their country, that only a truly Venezuelan solution would bring democracy and prosperity to their people. They read with renewed interest the works of Bolívar and sought to adapt his thoughts to what they considered to be Venezuela's contemporary problems.⁶⁶

⁶⁵William Krehm, Democracia y Tiranías en el Caribe (Mexico: Editores y Impresores Beatriz de Silva, 1949), pp. 290-291; Rourke, Gómez, p. 302; Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 79-83.

⁶⁶Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 73-82.

With this new ideological orientation, the young exiles began to seek every opportunity to make their ideas known to the people: through the newspapers, through public meetings, through conferences and debates. Along with this propagandistic activity, they devoted a great deal of energy to fomenting the basis for political parties, labor unions, student associations, and cultural and professional groups.⁶⁷

The old Federación de Estudiantes Venezolanos (FEV) was reorganized under the leadership of Luis Lander, later a prominent member of Acción Democrática.⁶⁸ An "Association of Former University Students" was attempted, but without great success. Oropeza Castillo, another AD leader, was active in the organization of an Asociación Nacional de Empleados (National Association of Employees). Jóvito Villalba and Raúl Leoni cooperated in the formation of a short-lived Anti-Imperialist Front. The "Unión Democrática" and the "Somatén Urbano-Cívico" were the labels given to two small and very transitory parties.

In contrast to these rather inconsequential organizations, others were destined to prove themselves hardy enough to survive many struggles. The Partido Republicano Progresista spread Communist ideas in Caracas under the leadership of Acosta Saignes and Rodolfo Quintero. Far more

⁶⁷Petancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 80-83.

⁶⁸See Lander, "La Doctrina Venezolana de Acción Democrática," pp. 20-39.

widespread was the Organización Venezolana (ORVE) led, in great part, by a number of returning exiles who would later be also among the founders of Acción Democrática.⁶⁹

Although ORVE was not properly speaking a political party, it was a political movement that sought to incorporate in its ranks all Venezuelans who desired to bring the mass of the population into the governing of the country. Ideologically flexible and encompassing many points of view, ORVE could claim adherents from many social classes. This aspect was already apparent in a letter, dated August 2, 1935 (thus prior to Gómez' death) in which Betancourt reviewed the bases of ORVE's functioning. The key to ORVE was then said to be the coalition of all antidictatorial sectors in a single popular front. For this reason, the slogan "to search for all that unites us and to avoid anything that might divide us," proposed by Mariano Picón-Salas, became the rallying cry for all those joining ORVE.⁷⁰

This movement exerted a great influence upon the population. From its inception it sought to capitalize on some of López Contreras' concessions, such as his naming of Rómulo Gallegos as minister of education. Gallegos, closely associated with ORVE, was to effect a substantial advance in the educational system of Venezuela.⁷¹ Significantly, too,

⁶⁹Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 79-90; Serxner, Acción Democrática, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁰Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, p. 90.

⁷¹Sánchez, The Development of Education in Venezuela, pp. 32-33; Serxner, Acción Democrática, p. 2; R. González Baquero, Análisis del Proceso Histórico de la Educación

ORVE stressed its multi-class nature and sought to orient the people and to show them how to obtain redress to their grievances and how to improve their living conditions.

ORVE devoted its attention as well to the economic problems and to the protection of the national resources. Critical of what it considered Venezuelan cultural and political backwardness and widespread misery in spite of natural riches, it attempted to find solutions for these problems. It asked for the democratization of the regime and for complete public freedom. All these topics in ORVE's program were intimately related to its nationalistic doctrine, a doctrine that sought solutions for those problems unique to Venezuela and that should be solved within a Venezuelan, rather than an international frame of reference, as advocated by the Communists.

This preoccupation with nationalistic solutions was characteristic of many ORVE leaders, some of whom had abandoned their early connections with Communist movements precisely because these movements did not fulfill Venezuela's needs and were primarily aimed at those countries where a strong proletariat with a well-developed class consciousness and organization already existed. Besides Betancourt and Picón-Salas, ORVE's leadership included Raúl Leoni, Gonzalo Barrios, Luis B. Prieto, Carlos D'Ascoli, and

Urbana y de la Educación Rural (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1962), pp. 1-223.

Andrés Eloy Blanco.⁷² Many in ORVE had been heavily influenced by Marxism in their thinking and their concern with the economic basis of politics clearly showed this background; what distinguished them from the Venezuelan Communists was their preference to seek solutions feasible within the national context as well as their desire to appeal to all classes of Venezuelans, not only the relatively small but growing proletariat of the country.

ORVE, the Unión Nacional Republicana and the Partido Republicano Progresista formed a coalition named Bloque de Abril.⁷³ The Bloque's purpose was to orient and mobilize public opinion around concrete formulas to be submitted to the National Congress for incorporation in the Venezuelan legislation. The Bloque sought the passage of measures that would eventually lead to the consolidation of public freedom as well as the elaboration of the necessary legislation for the improvement of the political and economic life of the nation. Thus, beyond having a program, the Bloque was interested in achieving its realization through the existent legal channels. Now that López Contreras was allowing a measure of public freedom, the Bloque did not want to endanger these emergent democratic trends by proposing to bypass the

⁷²Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 83-85.

⁷³Gonzalo Barrios, Bloque de Abril (Caracas: Lit. y Tip. Vargas, 1936). Barrios, who was minister of interior during most of Betancourt's and Leoni's regimes, continued very active in AD and was a possible presidential candidate for the 1968 elections.

existent governmental machinery. To challenge this machinery at this time would be sheer folly; the Bloque leadership understood well its own weaknesses and the paramount power of the government. The only possible avenue for the Bloque to obtain its demands appeared to be to work through Congress and to advocate a gradual change of the government's nature.

The proposed changes were spelled out in a comprehensive and yet restrained platform. It called for the convention of a National Congress that would meet free from the traditional presidential interference. The Bloque would work within and with the Congress for the scheduling of a presidential election. At the same time, constitutional amendments would be passed that would permit the calling of general elections for a new Congress that would be representative of the population and not of the President. Other amendments would create a first and second Vice-President and provide for the election of these officials. The Congress would decree a new law of Electoral Census and a new Election Law for the Federal District that would guarantee the effectiveness of the right of suffrage. In turn, state legislatures would modify their electoral laws to fulfill the same purposes at the state level. Election of municipal councils and state legislatures would take place. The National Congress was to meet on April 19, 1937 in order to undertake the complete reform of the national constitution. Finally, the platform called for all other organizations--political, cultural, professional, student, labor--then existing in the country to join the Bloque. This

"plataforma de lucha" was launched on March 31, 1936. Carlos Irazábal and Carmen Corao signed it as representatives of the Partido Republicano Progresista; E. Belacio Blanco and A. Fuenmayor Rivera for the Unión Nacional Republicana; J. S. González Gorron dona and Raúl Leoni for the ORVE.⁷⁴

National Democratic Party (PDN)

The aims of the Bloque were soon frustrated. Its proposals were too broad and too revolutionary and it was clear to López Contreras and his Congress that acceptance of any of the Bloque's demands would mean their own political demise in the near future. Further, the President was in full control of the country; his Congress was in full accord with his views and his restrained gestures towards democratization; both President and Congress counted with the full support of the oligarchy, the armed forces, and the oil entrepreneurs. Finally, in comparison with the governmental forces, the Bloque had a distinguished but divided leadership. The product of a coalition, it was torn from the beginning between the moderate, gradualistic, and constitutionalistic approach of the ORVE and the radical, revolutionary, and Marxist approach of the Partido Republicano Progresista. It lacked a broad popular basis, though it contained much that should appeal to the Venezuelan people. Further, most Venezuelans at this time seemed content with

⁷⁴Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 91-93.

the freedom López Contreras allowed them; after all, following the long years of the Gómez dictatorship, Lopez' rule was mild indeed.⁷⁵

With the vanishing of the Bloque, another attempt was made to form a united front, this time under the name of Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN). Again the central idea was to gather in one group all the democratic sectors contained in the various parties and thus perhaps form a front capable of challenging the government and those who sought to keep the status quo in Venezuela. This group would encompass the ORVE, the PRP, and the Bloque Nacional Democrático of Zulia State.

The legalization of the PDN was sought in the Federal District but the government was understandably reluctant to aid the fusion of all the forces that were openly or covertly opposed to it. The legalization was denied. An appeal was made to the Federal Court in 1937 with the same results. In January of that year an oil strike was broken with the imposition of a decree that made compulsory the return to work. With this strike the "honeymoon" period of liberalization that had followed the death of Gómez came to an abrupt end. The strikers, demanding constitutional reforms and other measures, had been supported by PDN leaders. Their involvement precipitated a series of repressive measures by the President--ORVE and other parties

⁷⁵Allen, Venezuela, especially its chaps. I-VII and XXIX-XXX.

had to be dissolved and much of the PDN leadership had to flee the country. Rómulo Gallegos resigned as minister of education in protest to López Contreras' actions.

Yet, in spite of all these legal impediments and repressive measures, the opposition was able to participate in electoral campaigns and to gain some seats in municipal councils and legislative assemblies. In Caracas, operating through the party Acción Municipal, organized for purely electoral ends, the opposition obtained 19 out of 22 posts in the city council. It was also able to obtain the designation of a number of leading members of democratic parties for deputies and senators, even though their selection was not, at that time, direct or popular.⁷⁶

These victories only prodded the government into renewed and stronger reaction. López Contreras violently condemned political parties, student and professional organizations, as well as trade unions. He depicted the leaders of these organizations as radicals, Communists, or dangerous extremists intent upon destroying Venezuela's peace and prosperity. An executive decree dissolved the ORVE, the PRP, and the Bloque. Scores of labor and political leaders were jailed and sent into exile. The Federal Court of Cassation annulled the election of democratic councilmen and parliamentarians.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 90-91.

⁷⁷ It has been charged that the Court annulled the elections upon explicit executive orders. Krehm, Democracia y Tiránías en el Caribe, p. 291; Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 92.

A few of the leaders, among them Betancourt, though ordered expelled, were able to evade persecution by hiding and began an underground activity. It was at this time that the organization of the PDN as a clandestine group began.⁷⁸ in the words of Betancourt,

The PDN . . . in its beginning was an organization in miniature. It was born clandestinely in a country where recurrent despotisms made difficult the political education of the people or the emergence of trained leaders for the tasks of organization and propaganda. But the PDN grew in membership, political leaders appeared to lead in tasks of organizing the workers, the students, and the professionals. . . . This was possible because the PDN had its own doctrine, a doctrine eminently nationalistic, and because it had a militant membership that was determined to spread the party's program.⁷⁹

Operating under cover from 1937 to 1941, the PDN managed to accomplish a surprising amount of propaganda. Its handbills and an irregularly published periodical, Izquierdas, denounced López Contreras' administrative incapacity, his repressive tactics against the opposition, and his alleged subservience to the "international oil consortium." "The PDN never ceased to attack the reactionary nature of the regime, its incapacity to give an affirmative answer to the many questions in the political, economical, and cultural life of the nation."⁸⁰ Betancourt, with the

⁷⁸ Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 57-58.

⁷⁹ Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 94.

⁸⁰ Alberto Carnevali, quoted in Valmore Rodríguez, Bayonetas sobre Venezuela (Mexico: Editores e Impresores Beatriz de Silva, 1950), p. 19.

help of friends, was able to contribute a regular column to the Caracas daily Ahora. In those columns he underlined the PDN's criticisms and the Party's proposed program. Though persecuted, the Party survived through its organized cells, committees of five members who came together for secret discussions every week.⁸¹

Like the ill-fated Bloque de Abril, however, the PDN suffered from trying to encompass too many divergent political tendencies within its structure. Dubbed "the political minestrone," the PDN was rent by internal strife that began to strain its unity. Its Communist members, who wanted to preserve their own identity and impose their ideas upon the rest of the members decided, after a few arguments, to abandon the PDN ranks. But they left without a bitter dispute and with the understanding that a joint committee of their leaders and those of the PDN would be maintained. With the exit of the Communists, only those who had a marked democratic and nationalistic tendency remained in the PDN.⁸²

With the PDN restrained by its clandestine existence, another try at legalization of a democratic party was made through the Partido Demócrata Venezolano (PDV). When parties were banned by decree in February of 1937, General José Rafael Gabaldón had the idea of organizing a party that would

⁸¹Serxner, Acción Democrática, p. 3.

⁸²Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 101-106.

"gather in a single cause all the forces truly and indisputably democratic of the country."⁸³ Besides Gabaldón, Andrés Eloy Blanco, Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso and Luis B. Prieto--three outstanding AD leaders in another decade--were active in the formation of the PDV.

According to the PDV's manifesto, it intended to become legal and to serve as a channel for popular opposition to any form of tyranny. It stressed its nationalism and its opposition to the subordination of national resources to foreign enterprises. It considered itself a multiclass party, but it promised greater attention to the least privileged sector of the Venezuelan population, the campesinos. It insisted that it would never permit personalism, which it considered the traditional curse of Venezuelan politics, to pervert or overshadow its hallowed intents.⁸⁴

But all this remained only a project because, like the political groups it sought to replace, it too was never granted legality, thus being dubbed by Ramón David León, "the political miscarriage."⁸⁵

The PDV's failure, however, should not overshadow the fact that it did elicit a measure of popular interest

⁸³Quoted in ibid., p. 107.

⁸⁴General José Rafael Gabaldón, El "Partido Demócrata Venezolano" y su Proceso (Documentos) (Caracas: Editorial Elite, 1938).

⁸⁵David León, Por donde Vamos, passim.

and support. Indeed, when Medina Angarita, López Contreras' successor, sought to form his own political group, he named it Partido Democrático Venezolano (PDV), thus trying to confuse and to capitalize on the original PDV appeal. Needless to say, Medina Angarita's PDV had no links whatever with Gabaldón's party; it was purely a government party for the promotion of candidates approved by General Medina and his followers.⁸⁶

Betancourt, who had given himself up to the authorities in 1939 and gone into exile in Chile, where he wrote his first full-fledged analytical book, Problemas Venezolanos,⁸⁷ returned to Venezuela in 1941 with the intention of aiding the clandestine PDN's preparations to launch an active campaign against López Contreras' hand-picked candidate. The government's choice, General Medina Angarita, another Tachirense, had been serving as Minister of War. In the well-established tradition of Venezuelan politics, it was a foregone conclusion that Medina Angarita

⁸⁶ Partido Democrático Venezolano, La Libertad Económica y la Intervención del Estado (Caracas: Tip. La Nación, 1945); Partido Democrático Venezolano, Proyecto de Bases y Estatutos del Partido Democrático Venezolano (Trujillo, 1943); Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petroleo, pp. 163-165.

⁸⁷ Rómulo Betancourt, Problemas Venezolanos (Santiago, Chile: Imprenta y Editorial Futuro, 1940). Prior to this Betancourt had written several polemic tracts, some of which reflect the Marxist influence in his early years. See Rómulo Betancourt, Dos Meses en las Cárceles de Gómez (Barranquilla, Colombia, 1928); Rómulo Betancourt, En las Huelas de la Pezuña (Santo Domingo, D.R., 1929); Rómulo Betancourt, Una República en Venta (Caracas, 1937); Rómulo Betancourt, Con Quién Estamos y Contra Quién Estamos (San José, C.R., 1932).

would win the electoral contest.

In spite of Medina's assured victory, the PDN decided to present a symbolic candidate, Rómulo Gallegos, Venezuela's internationally acclaimed novelist and one who had taught many of the PDN's leaders in their days at the Lyceo in Caracas.⁸⁸ Using Gallegos' name as a rallying point, the PDN conducted a widespread campaign.

But Gallegos' prestige and the intensive campaign promoted in his name could not surmount the government's determination to make Medina Angarita president. The López Contreras-controlled Congress, met on April 28, 1941, and cast 130 electoral votes for the official candidate and 13 votes for Gallegos. The election had been lost but the campaign had produced fruits. The PDN had contended on a national scope and had attracted the attention of many. Its program had been publicly debated and had become a rallying point for the growing opposition. Shortly after Medina's election, the PDN was legally recognized under the name of Acción Democrática.

Acción Democrática: An Outgrowth of the PDN

The PDN, which had existed clandestinely since 1937,

⁸⁸ Betancourt explained his party's choice of Gallegos thus: "We wanted to honor the man who had been our teacher in worldly as well as academic life. . . . We knew we were not going to win the election but . . . we accomplished what we set out to do: to dispute the idea of 'continuismo' and stir public opinion." Quoted in Luis Enrique Osorio, Democracia en Venezuela (Bogotá: Editorial Litografía Colombia, 1943), p. 164. For Gallegos' own interpretation, see Rómulo Gallegos, Una Posición en la Vida (Mexico: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954), pp. 170-171.

became a legal party under the name of Acción Democrática (AD) on September 13, 1941. Thus the history of AD actually begins with that of the PDN and much of its ideology and structure is borrowed from the earlier group.⁸⁹ It was in the PDN that the AD vanguard had been formed under the expert political guidance of Betancourt,⁹⁰ Valmore Rodríguez, Paz Galarrraga, and Raúl Leoni. They appealed to all social classes of Venezuelans, though they concentrated their organizative efforts particularly in those broadest--and most neglected--sectors of the society, the campesinos, the workers, and the middle class.

Leonardo Ruiz Pineda called Betancourt "the supreme activist of the PDN" and he explained,

He evades the police persecution--a unique case in our political history--and takes charge of the titanic task of building a party in the underground. . . . He formulated the theory and the program of the PDN, an organization of the Left, an instrument at the service of the democratic revolution. . . . He began his crusade with groups of students and workers--we were a group of young students, moved with the fervor of youth, and a group of workers under the banner of social justice. Betancourt gave us the ideological background, the programmatic basis for the struggle that lay ahead.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Rómulo Betancourt, "Evolución Histórica de Venezuela," Boletín de la Unión Panamericana, LXXX (July, 1946), 376-382; Domingo Alberto Rangel, "Explicación Histórica de la Revolución Venezolana," Cuadernos Americanos [Mexico], VI (May-June, 1947), 7-20; Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 5-51.

⁹⁰ Rómulo Betancourt, Rómulo Betancourt: Semblanza de un Político Popular, 1928-1948 (Caracas: Ediciones Caribe, 1943).

⁹¹ Quoted in Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 123-124. Ruiz Pineda, a prominent AD leader, led the underground fight against Pérez Jiménez and died at the hands of the dictator's secret police.

Magda Portal saw Betancourt's approach to the Venezuelan problems as an insightful adaptation of the approach of her own party, the Partido Aprista Peruano, to Venezuelan conditions.⁹² She added,

Betancourt, under the impact of the economic doctrines of the times, with a dialectical mind and a realistic sense, tries to find solutions for the unique needs of his country. . . . Today, after having contributed to the creation of the instrument for the liberation of his homeland--a political party that joins together the workingmen and the intellectuals of Venezuela--Betancourt continues preaching . . . the program and the doctrine of the PDN, preparing the people for the time when his party will accomplish its mission in power.⁹³

There is no doubt that Betancourt had profited from his familiarity with the APRA and with other democratic

⁹²Various other authors have underlined the similarities between the APRA and the AD, though their labels for these parties vary. See Harry Kantor, "The Development of Acción Democrática de Venezuela," Journal of Inter-American Studies, I (April, 1959), 237-255; Robert J. Alexander, "The Latin American Aprista Parties," Political Quarterly, XX (July-September, 1949), 236-247; George Blanksten, "Political Groups in Latin America," American Political Science Review, LII (March, 1959), 106-127; William W. Pierson and Federico G. Gil, Governments of Latin America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1957), pp. 318-320--all of whom call APRA, AD and similar groups, "modern parties." Silvert, The Conflict Society: Reaction and Revolution in Latin America, pp. 228-256, who calls them "social democratic"; Asher N. Christensen, "The General Nature of Political Parties in Latin America," in Christensen (ed.), The Evolution of Latin American Governments (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 508, who calls them "indigenous nationalistic"; and Edelman, Latin American Government and Politics, p. 350, who calls them "native liberal parties." No matter the label, all stress the basic ideological similarities that make it possible to consider such parties as AD and APRA under a single heading.

⁹³Quoted in Rómulo Gallegos et al., Rómulo Betancourt, Interpretación de su Doctrina Popular y Democrática (Caracas: Editorial SUMA, 1958), pp. 63-67.

parties in the hemisphere. During the 1930's and the long exile years, Betancourt had lived in various Latin-American countries and had made valuable contacts with democratic groups. From these contacts he had evolved the idea of creating an international organization that would permit the various democratic political parties in Latin America to help each other. With this in mind, he had promoted a 1940 meeting in Chile of leaders of the PDN, of the Paraguayan Partido Febrerista, the Cuban Partido Auténtico, the Peruvian Partido Aprista, and the Chilean Partido Socialista. No permanent organization had emerged from the meeting but the democratic leaders had pledged themselves to fight against all forms of dictatorship and to promote the betterment of the conditions in their respective countries through democratic means.⁹⁴

The pedenistas' pledge to fight against dictatorship was not a mere gesture. The PDN, though forced to operate underground, had been active in the formation of small groups of party activists. These groups of five members gathered together for weekly discussions and each member was called upon to help in the formation of similar political groups among his professional colleagues. In the trade unions, student associations, and similar entities, the PDN members were expected to exert their influence and to make further

⁹⁴ Harry Kantor, "La Colaboración Entre los Partidos," Panoramas [Mexico], II (November-December, 1964), 67-76.

members for the party. Further, the pedenistas were in charge of the mass distribution of party literature and of the constant recruitment of new party supporters.

Through these efforts the PDN had grown slowly but constantly throughout Venezuela. The small political committees or cells spread throughout the main cities and successfully attracted labor. Meanwhile, its program had become familiar to many Venezuelans. It called for universal and direct suffrage, for public freedom, and for individual rights. It called for harmonious relations with all nations, especially those in Latin America and in which social, economic, and political backwardness prevailed. It insisted on getting a fair share from the exploration of natural resources, especially petroleum. This "fair share" would, in turn, be used for the diversification of industry, for the democratization of rural property, and for the improvement of living conditions.⁹⁵

The organizational activities of the PDN experienced a new surge with its legalization under the name of Acción Democrática. Perhaps ironically, these organizational activities which had become possible because of the liberalization introduced by President Medina, in turn undermined the presidential grip over the country. Medina himself was torn between the authoritarian pattern of the past and his

⁹⁵Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 9-51.

own inclination for greater democracy.⁹⁶

In the pattern established in 1899, the new president was another man of Táchira State and predictably he had announced his intention to carry on the policies of his predecessor. Once in office, however, he showed that he preferred to ignore the Táchira clique and he chose capable and efficient aides, among them, the economist and writer Uslar Pietri. Political prisoners were released; exiles were allowed to return. Medina went as far as permitting free speech, freedom of association and freedom of the press. Seeking popularity for his party, the government passed more liberal legislation than had ever previously existed, including provision for women's suffrage in municipal elections and the eventual direct popular election of congressmen.

All these measures worked to undermine Medina's power. His attempts at popularization of his own party, the Partido Democrático Venezolano, proved a complete failure. Aside from the backing of civil servants who were compelled to join the official party, the PDV had few other followers.⁹⁷ On the other hand, his liberalization program

⁹⁶ Isaías Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia (Caracas: Pensamiento Vivo, C.A., Editores, 1963); Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela, pp. 251-252. The Marslands are not alone in saying that Medina was one of the most liberal presidents Venezuela ever had. Among many others, see Morór, A History of Venezuela, pp. 207-213. Betancourt himself admitted that the years of Medina's government were peaceful; see Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 134.

⁹⁷ This charge, made by several students of Venezuelan politics, is vehemently denied by Medina Angarita. See his Cuatro Años de Democracia, pp. 25-31, especially

was far from satisfactory to the ever more powerful and popular AD. But Medina's liberal attitude towards AD was sufficient to allow AD's continued growth as well as--and perhaps more importantly--to irritate old Gomecistas who began to cluster around López Contreras. To further complicate the situation for Medina, the apparent presidential inability to fully embrace either López Contreras or AD led many of the younger military officers to draw away from him. Some of them desired a return to the old, stable ways of the Táchira dynasty; others envisioned AD as the eventual ruler of the country and therefore wished to jump on the bandwagon; finally, some were genuinely attracted to the AD program. These disgruntled military men joined together in the Unión Patriótica Militar (UPM), a clandestine group opposed to Medina.⁹⁸

Lacking the full support of the army, Medina tried to build power upon other groups. His Partido Democrático Venezolano having proved a complete failure,⁹⁹ the next step was to court the labor unions. The Communists, unable to muster sufficient strength to name their own candidates,

pp. 28-29. On the PDV program, see Partido Democrático Venezolano, Proyecto de Bases, passim.

⁹⁸ Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, pp. 88-120. Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 213-214, estimates that those involved numbered about 150 of the 900 active army officers.

⁹⁹ Inter-American, III (October, 1944), 8-10.

supported an alliance with Medina, while AD continued to oppose the president, to seek control of the labor unions, and to follow the nationalistic program outlined by the old PDN.¹⁰⁰

An election in 1944 gave Medina a foretaste of things to come. This election, to be held in April, was to choose municipal councilmen and state assemblymen who, by the provisions of the constitution then in vigor, would elect the congressmen who, in turn, would elect the president. Actually, in practice the congressmen always had chosen as the new executive whomever the incumbent president indicated. The elections, for these reasons, assumed a significance all out of proportion to the posts directly involved. By this time AD felt strong enough to hope for its eventual capture of the presidency and this hope spurred it on to great electoral efforts during 1944.¹⁰¹ To make things more difficult for Medina, there was some other less organized opposition which centered in disgruntled landholders--many of the old-time Gomecistas--many businessmen and industrialists, some middle class elements who feared communism, and pro-López

¹⁰⁰ Robert J. Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 3-24, 142-152; Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 149-153.

¹⁰¹ Austin F. MacDonald, Latin American Politics and Government (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1949), pp. 422-423.

groups in the army.¹⁰²

Although Medina's candidates won the 1944 election, Acción Democrática made a very strong showing. Betancourt won the post of councilman of the Federal District, the first public office he ever held. The Chamber of Deputies contained a highly vocal minority of AD members and sympathizers, all the more effective because of Medina's decision not to reverse himself on his course of liberalism. He was far more concerned about the traditional conservative groups supporting López Contreras--the owners of the great estates, the senior army officers, professional people, and to a great extent the Catholic Church, which had been shaken by Medina's legalization of the Communist Party in 1945. However, these conservative elements seemed to be the only hard-core opposition to Medina, because the president and AD leaders had held negotiations and had come to a compromise and an agreement for the joint support of a liberal candidate, Diógenes Escalante.

The situation changed rapidly, however, in the early fall of 1945. Unfortunately Escalante fell ill just two months before the elections and had to withdraw. The Medina-controlled PDV convention then nominated the minister of agriculture, Angel Biaggini, as a substitute. To Betancourt and other AD leaders the substitute, a complete stranger to most Venezuelans, seemed no more than a puppet for Medina,

¹⁰² Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela, pp. 252-253.

who had never earned the adecos' complete trust. AD withdrew its support for the new official candidate. Medina, still largely unconcerned about AD's power, continued to concentrate on averting a takeover by the conservatives, perhaps under López' leadership. While threats were being exchanged between Medina's supporters and the conservatives, suddenly on October 18, 1945, the government was unexpectedly seized by a coalition of junior army officers of the secret UPM and the AD.¹⁰³

Seizing the military academy and the presidential palace and barracks in the early morning and fighting it out with the police and loyal troops, the rebels were in control by nightfall. Medina was forced to resign and he and López Contreras were ordered into exile. Betancourt became the provisional president and organized a governing junta of seven men, only two of whom were army officers.

The October, 1945, revolution was the most fundamental in Venezuela's history. This was no palace revolt of the type characteristic of the country's past. Two things made it unique--the military and a popular party had joined together in the removal of a military-directed regime; the popular party, unique in itself in the context of Venezuelan political

¹⁰³AD was quite hesitant about a joint action with the military, the very elements it had condemned for their monopoly of power in Venezuela. This topic will be broached later, though an explanation appears in Ana Mercedes Pérez, La Verdad Inédita (Caracas: Editorial Artes Gráficas, 1947). For Betancourt's record of the events preceding the 1945 coup, see Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 185-197.

history, had a well developed program that aimed at the restructuring of Venezuelan society and possessed an extensive organization that sought to embrace all sectors of that society.¹⁰⁴

No matter what their motives, the military had joined a popular party in the removal of a military-directed regime. This was unique in the history of Venezuela. It was something more than a contest for power among the caudillos or a reversion to the days before Gómez. It was also more than a shuffling of positions among former Gómez supporters, as it had been in the selection of López and later of Medina Angarita. In this case, the newly professional military had tipped the scales and yet, instead of usurping victory from the hands of its popular ally as would have been expected from the context of Venezuelan history, it had given the first fruits of victory to these popular leaders and had reserved for itself, for a time at least, a rather limited and discreet role. Thus, as in the past, the military had been crucial in the changing of the guard at Miraflores Palace; but, in contrast to previous occasions, it had handed over power to civilian leaders.

Of greater significance, and again a break with the past, was the fact that the October Revolution was broadly

¹⁰⁴Venezuela, Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno, El Gobierno Revolucionario de Venezuela ante su Pueblo (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1946); Venezuela, Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno, La Revolución Venezolana ante la Opinión de América (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1946).

based and received the support of various sectors of the population in various parts of the country, not only the oligarchy in Caracas. Acción Democrática, the leading force behind the revolution, was committed to a drastic alteration in the relations among the various social groups, to giving access and voice to sectors of the society which had never been allowed a role--specifically, the peasants and labor. The revolution had marked the assumption of political power, for the first time in Venezuela's history, of a party with a well developed popular program and an extensive organization which claimed to represent all Venezuelans. It is to this ideology and organization in the context of the contemporary party system of Venezuela that we next turn our attention.

CHAPTER IV

ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY VENEZUELAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND PROGRAMS

As the survey of Venezuelan political history has shown, the organization of Acción Democrática signaled the emergence of a modern political party that in a relatively short time was able to capture the country's government. Acción Democrática was unique among Venezuelan political parties for its preoccupation with evolving an ideology that would not only satisfy long-range goals for Venezuelan political, social, and economic development, but would also be flexible enough to adapt itself to changing circumstances and to changing demands. Further, from the days of its precursor, the Partido Democrático Nacional, AD had carefully nurtured the formation of leadership and membership cadres destined to survive beyond the limited electoral campaigns. These characteristics of Acción Democrática distinguished it from previous transitory political parties that had existed in Venezuela.

Political parties in Venezuela had been ephemeral bodies from the time of independence to the death of Gómez. The flourishing Patriotic Society of Bolívar's youth had enjoyed a short life in spite of its advanced social program

for bringing about economic and political independence for Venezuelans and in spite of its sponsorship by many of the Venezuelan elite. The struggle for independence from Spain had obliterated the idealism of the Liberator; it had left in its wake a prostrated Venezuela, an easy prey for the authoritarian caudillos who ruled perhaps even more harshly than had the Spaniards. In the era of the caudillo, the party, like everything else, was a prop for its master; a toy to entertain him, a tool to reinforce his power and provide more riches for himself and his favorites of the day; a mere label without substance, an almost fictitious superstructure with no popular base, with a totally imaginary program which had no possibility of ever being fulfilled. The meaninglessness of party activity had reached its climax during the Gómez regime, which did not even find it expedient or necessary to carry a political banner or to appeal to the people.¹

But Gómez himself assured the eventual demise of his type of authoritarian rule when he permitted the exploitation of petroleum, with the inevitable consequences of the formation of a growing proletariat as well as an ever-increasing urbanization and migration of Venezuelans. This new proletariat, pampered with privileges for its crucial role in

¹Gómez reportedly believed that "political excitement (i.e., political parties) necessarily brings on civil war." Levin, A Halo for Gómez, p. 422. In the perspective of past Venezuelan history, when political party labels served as banners for warring caudillos, Gómez may not have been entirely wrong in his assessment.

sustaining the prosperity of Gómez and his henchmen, was to grow in class consciousness and become exposed to trade unionism and the Marxist ideas of the day. In the words of the historian Guillermo Morón, "whereas in the nineteenth century guerrilleros and caudillos sought the support of the country folk in order to turn them into warriors [to do battle for their cause] . . . , now politicians sought to win over the oil worker to their parties."²

The oil fields became magnets for an impoverished rural population and peasants traveled for miles in the hope of obtaining employment and a better living. At the same time, Caracas was no longer the sleepy town it had been for centuries. It too attracted the campesinos, the foreign entrepreneurs, the landed elite. In spite of Gómez' censorship, disturbing ideas began to filter into Venezuela. University students began to hear of successful student movements elsewhere in the Americas and they too became familiar with Marx and with the accomplishments of the Mexican revolution.

Similarly, when Gómez moved to replace the various regional caudillos' militias with a national military loyal to him he was also assuring the eventual emergence of a professional class of military men who would no longer countenance obedience to semiliterate men like Gómez himself.³

²Morón, A History of Venezuela, p. 198.

³In the estimate of the Marslands, "the days when a man could successfully wage a revolution by leading a few hundred badly-armed bandits over the hills had passed. From now on, revolutions would erupt within the army itself. . . .

These younger officers, though pampered by Gómez, were no longer willing to suffer the vagaries of regimes which often overlooked merit for the loyalty of henchmen when promotion time came around.

Venezuela had endured from 1908 until his death in 1935 the long and brutal dictatorship of Gómez. His death had set off a series of blind and bloody disturbances which resulted in eventual further repression under Gómez' successor. But neither Gómez nor López Contreras could control the forces they had been at least partly responsible for unleashing. Appealing to the workers, to the peasants, to the students, to the growing middle class, parties now formed underground and to such an extent that in 1941 President Medina thought it expedient to sanction them, including the most popular, Acción Democrática. This party, following its long-held program, was to seek the integration of all Venezuelans in the political, social, and economic life of the nation. AD was so effective in its efforts that by 1943 General Medina found it necessary to establish an official party to counteract AD and later, in 1944, was left with no choice but to seek a compromise with AD in the selection of a presidential candidate. This arrangement failed. The overthrow of Medina by AD and disaffected members of the military took place on October 18, 1945. Students and workers, many of them active in Acción Democrática, poured

The era of the caudillo was over. After Gómez, power in Venezuela would belong to officers of a professional army." Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, p. 231.

into the Caracas streets. Bitter fighting with the Caracas police force continued for two more days, but by this time the police were unable to quell the popular uprising. Police resistance was futile before the mass support for the AD-led overthrow of President Medina.⁴

The army officers of the secret lodge Unión Patriótica Militar (UPM), who joined forces with Acción Democrática in the overthrow of General Medina, had varying motives for their actions. Some were apparently influenced by the stagnation of the army in which they found themselves. Gómez had been primarily responsible for the creation of a professional military in Venezuela; these professionals were now restless against Gómez' successors, men who held them back and still favored their old, untrained, unprofessionalized, military cronies.⁵ Others, especially in the lower ranks, wanted increased pay and more rapid promotion. A few, among them the respected Captain Mario Vargas, were sincerely idealistic and sought to help the ushering in of a new era of democracy and social justice in Venezuela. Finally, there were those (and in this group was probably Major Pérez Jiménez)

⁴S. E. Finer, The Man on Horseback (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), pp. 56-57, 136-138.

⁵Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 190 tells of some officers who "painted a picture of an army where not even the superficial modifications introduced into the civil administration in 1936 had been implemented, where the arbitrary methods . . . for the conduct of the armed forces and the selection of commanders and officers still continued alive and active."

who were shrewd enough to realize the wide popularity of Acción Democrática and who felt the days of Medina were numbered. These ambitious military officers may have joined with AD in the overthrow of Medina in the belief that AD would assure the coup a popular base, at the same time that they would eventually be able to control AD, in the traditional fashion of Venezuelan political history.⁶

The AD-military entente was short-lived and, as many times before, a dictator soon intervened in the process of democratization of Venezuela. In contrast with other times, however, AD did survive the dictatorship; more than that, repression forced the strengthening of its programmatic lines, the testing of its organizational structure, and the prompting of its coalition with other political parties. It is to these 1945-to-date events that we devote our attention in this chapter. In so doing, we shall attempt to place Acción Democrática in the context of the major contemporary Venezuelan political ideologies and programs.

The Democratic Left

The programmatic orientation of Acción Democrática is usually considered democratic Left in its nature.⁷ This orientation involves a belief that the maintenance of

⁶ Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), p. 127.

⁷ See supra, chap. III, n. 93.

democratic order is indispensable and that the economic structure has to be changed so that the living conditions of the population will be improved. The agent of change is a popularly elected government; the vehicle for the obtaining of such an elected government is a political party that encompasses all sectors of the society.

In schematic form, these key issues dominate the party literature:

- (1) a multiclass party with an explicit but flexible program and with a national organization
- (2) political and economic transformation of the Venezuelan campo (agrarian reform)
- (3) political and economic strengthening of the Venezuelan labor force
- (4) nationalistic petroleum policies as catalyst for industrial diversification and welfare improvement
- (5) firm but rational international policies based on Bolivarian principles.⁸

In order to implement its key objectives, AD had pushed for the development and strengthening of agrarian reform and industrialization; for the integration of the production

⁸ What adecos like to call the Party "theses" are well-defined programmatic issues that invariably appear prominently in the Party periodicals such as A.D., Ahora, Política; in Betancourt's writings and speeches; and in the voluminous party tracts. In all these sources it is stressed that though all issues are equally relevant to the transformation of Venezuela into a modern, integrated nation, none can be democratically realized without the proper vehicle for popular representation--a multiclass political party, a party that is strong enough to win elections and to gain control of the government and, as government, to push for the fulfillment of its program (theses).

of petroleum into the rest of the national economy; for the utilization of unexploited natural resources; and for the extension to the whole population of opportunities in education, employment, and social security. In other words, AD had called for an involvement of the citizen in the affairs of the state and for a government that would be responsive to the people's needs and that would bring about a greater and more intensive utilization of the human and natural resources of the nation through democratic and evolutionary, as opposed to authoritarian and revolutionary, means.⁹

In the pursuit of these key objectives, prior to 1945, Acción Democrática had worked at two levels--one, its grass roots organization had attempted to involve the various groups in Venezuelan society in the formulation of the party's immediate program; two, AD was profoundly aware that its organization and its program, no matter how extensive and how good, had little chance to achieve the party's objectives if the party failed to capture the Venezuelan executive. This awareness had prompted AD's attempt to work with President Medina Angarita in order to have some influence in his traditional privilege of picking his successor. When this attempt

⁹Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, *passim*; Acción Democrática, Estatutos, *passim*; Lander, "La Doctrina Venezolana de Acción Democrática"; "Here is the Platform of the Majority Party," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Winter, 1963-1964), 3-4; "Convenio Firmado entre los Partidos Acción Democrática (VG) y Alianza Popular Revolucionaria (APRA)," Documentos (July-September, 1962), pp. 329-330.

failed, AD, though it had long been calling for civilian rule through elections, had bent to the necessity of working with highly placed military officers to overthrow Medina and then imposing itself as the dominant element in the ruling Junta.¹⁰

Once in power, Acción Democrática was able to retain the Venezuelan executive for only three years. Why? Many well-founded reasons have been put forward,¹¹ but only one will merit our attention at this point. Acción Democrática's assumption of power in 1945 signaled a break with the past. The traditional elite, the Tachirenses military, the hacendados, the business elite, the foreign and foreign-aligned entrepreneurs had been replaced in the government's favor by the still heterogeneous and largely uneducated and politically unsophisticated elements in Venezuela, who had long existed at the margin of national events. Acción Democrática had concentrated its organizing efforts among these elements, but it could not claim to have brought them fully within the reach

¹⁰ Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 188-204.

¹¹ Alexander in his The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 34-46, feels that the social legislation of the Junta and of the Gallegos' government had "gained exceedingly wide popularity for the party . . . [but] had disturbed the top officers of the Army, including several who had been instrumental in putting Acción Democrática in power." The immediate cause of the downfall of the AD regime is seen as the lack of political experience and astuteness on the part of novelist-president Gallegos in dealing with the insurgent military. José Rodríguez (ed.) in Quién Derrocó a Gallegos? (2d ed.; Caracas: C.A. Tip. Garrido, 1961), p. 7, places much blame on the "Venezuelan reactionaries," the Catholic Church, the military, the Medinistas and Gómezlopecistas, the pro-American interests, all led by the social Christian party COPEI.

of its organization and of its political indoctrination--thus it could not, and it did not, count on their support at the time of the fatal crisis in 1948. The coup that took place late that year to unseat the popularly elected President Gallegos provoked a meager amount of demonstrations and protests.

While the people had been touched by AD but had not been fully imbued with a loyalty to the government dominated by that party, the traditionally powerful elements in the Venezuelan society had been unnecessarily alienated from AD by the revolutionary government's uncompromising stand in many instances. The AD-sponsored social legislation, at times vague but always far reaching in its unsettling implications for the status quo, could only be seen as a continuing threat to those who had long benefited from that status quo. The trials of many elite members and the confiscation of property of many who had indeed been associated with the Tachirense dynasty but who had been largely honest in their public dealings, could only prompt further bitterness toward AD. Thus, from the very early days of the Junta, the elite began to actively seek ways and to form alliances in the hope of overthrowing the AD-dominated government.¹² Whether a more conciliatory attitude on the

¹²Iuzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, 1928-1963, pp. 135-165; Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, Escrito de Memoria (Mexico: Editorial Mazatlán, n.d.), pp. 1-142.

part of AD was possible at this time is difficult to say; what can be said on the basis of voluminous data and of personal interviews is that AD's inflexible and perhaps persecuting attitude toward the traditional elite assured the elite's determination to work for the replacement of those it considered its mortal enemies.¹³

The ultimate result of AD's inflexibility toward the elite at this time was AD's inability to serve as an integrative element. Instead of helping bridge the gap between the masses and the elite, AD had, during the trienio, in practice kept them bitterly fighting and distrusting each other. Though the lower classes (represented by the AD-dominated government) were on top and the elite were for the moment the outsiders, this pattern of nonintegration between sectors of the Venezuelan society was in practice a continuation (even if in reverse) of the traditional pattern of compartmentalization of groups that had always characterized Venezuelan political history. It was also in the traditional pattern of Venezuelan history that the military in 1948, as they had been in 1945 and ever before, were the pivotal element in the overthrow of the government. When the highly placed officers decided to break with the constitutionally-elected President Gallegos--no matter what was their

¹³See, for example, I. F. de Medina Angarita and Arturo Uslar Pietri, "Presentación y Prólogo," in Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia, pp. 3-12; Boersner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," pp. 73-96; Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 214-215; Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, pp. 254-258; Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, pp. 424-425, 442-461.

motivation--the overthrow of the government soon became a fait accompli.

The 1948-1958 dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez was a futile attempt to reverse the pattern of politics and to return to that existent during the Gómez days with its characteristic arbitrariness and disregard for democratic procedures. The gradual liberalization which had taken place since 1936, however, could not be undone, no matter how powerful the repressive machinery imposed on Venezuelans. Furthermore, the spectacular construction programs undertaken by Pérez Jiménez for the capital and other major cities served to increase the influx of rural elements from the campo to the ciudad where they, though largely unskilled and unprepared, hoped to find jobs and a better living than in the traditionally neglected campo. The granting of new petroleum concessions, the few and grandiose industrial complexes, and the growth of the governmental bureaucracy inevitably entailed the expansion of the proletariat and the middle sectors. Finally, the unsettling experiences of the campesinos in the cities, the clandestine organization of the proletariat and middle sectors by the outlawed AD, all helped create the conditions for insurrection--these elements no longer wanted to remain at the margin of national political life--after all, they had tasted political involvement and the fruits of a welfare-inclined government during the trienio--but were eager to press for concessions from the

dictator.¹⁴

To counter the underground offensive, Pérez Jiménez had formed his own political party, the Frente Electoral Independiente (FEI), which soon proved to be totally unappealing to most Venezuelans. Its small membership was made up almost entirely of the dictator's cronies and a few bureaucrats.¹⁵ The dictator's national labor federation--staffed by many Communists, including for a time, Rodolfo Quintero as president--¹⁶ also failed in competing against AD trade union leaders. In the meantime, the growing governmental repression eventually provoked the open criticism of the Catholic hierarchy.¹⁷ His favoritism, his continual

¹⁴ Ahumada, "Hypothesis for the Diagnosis of a Situation of Social Change: The Case of Venezuela," in Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, pp. 25-58.

¹⁵ For an official record and appraisal of the Pérez Jiménez regime to 1954, see Ladislao T. Tarnóci, El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela, Vida y Obra de Marcos Pérez Jiménez (Madrid: Ediciones Verdad, 1954), especially pp. 99-337.

¹⁶ The question of Communists in Pérez Jiménez' labor federation is further examined in supra, chap. VII. Ample documentation appears in Robert J. Alexander's Communism in Latin America (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), especially pp. 267-268. See also Rollie E. Popino, International Communism in Latin America (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 7-8; Robert J. Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1965), pp. 142-152; U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, pp. 415-416.

¹⁷ Mecham, Church and State in Latin America, p. 110; Hispanic American Report, X (July, 1957), 309.

disdain for democratic processes (the 1952 "elections" are considered a complete farce by most observers)¹⁸ helped alienate the students, even though he finished for them a magnificent university campus which had been started in the AD trienio. His creation of a dreaded secret police and his granting of extensive powers and monies to it served only to sow distrust among the military who began to fear that the Seguridad was slated to outrank them in power and in organization.¹⁹ The withdrawal of support by military officers, combined with the growing popular discontent and the Church criticisms, culminated in the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez in early 1958 by a united front of the underground forces led by Acción Democrática.

In the period of 1958-1968 AD's ideology and program were characterized by a spirit of pragmatism and prudence.²⁰ It seemed to have accepted the fact that its total goals could not be implemented immediately and that the transformation of the country should proceed at a rhythm sufficiently gradual so as not to lose the concurrence and the collaboration of

¹⁸ See, for example, Morón, A History of Venezuela, p. 216; Hubert Herring, A History of Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present (2d ed. rev.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1965), pp. 490-491.

¹⁹ Finer, The Man on Horseback, pp. 136-138; Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 45-46.

²⁰ Demetrio Boersner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," Política, III (October, 1963), 73-96; John D. Martz, "Venezuela," in Ben C. Burnett and Kenneth F. Johnson (eds.), Political Forces in Latin America: Dimensions of the Quest for Stability (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 199-230.

other groups, less socialistically oriented, but still democratic, and valuable supporters of the experiment with constitutional government.

This cautious strategy, expressed and implemented by the AD-dominated government coalition, did not fail to produce some problems within the large AD membership. For a revolutionary party, used to opposition and to resistance, it was not always easy to govern and to defend the established order, even when this order was democratic and reformist. The spirit that produced the extreme Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) was a result, in part, of the revolutionary impatience that--had not the external influence of Communism and the Cuban issue intervened--could well have acquired a character of constructive criticism within AD.

Thus, inevitably, as the party in power since 1958, AD has been the target of criticism not only from the parties outside the governmental coalitions but also from some of its own followers. Impatience with the progress of the AD reform program and the party's anti-Castro stand resulted in the defection of some party leaders and alienated some members. Others were mainly motivated by personal ambitions to take over the AD national leadership. In this case, they formed the AD-OP (Opposition) but they cloaked their own motives in protests for the need of greater and faster reforms. Acción Democrática was able to weather both types of defections; it seemed that as long as the AD "Old Guard" or government

party (AD-Gob) retained its image as the principal organizer and protector of rural and urban labor, its political power was assured. Finally, the Old Guard was in control of the executive--always an advantage in Venezuelan politics.

It should be stressed, however, that fundamentally the majority of internal divergencies have been resolved democratically within the AD structure. There have been no irreconcilable currents for the government or for the revolution, as if these were completely antithetical positions. Once the MIR and the AD-Op drained a fairly small number of AD militantes, the great mass of adecos seemed to view the AD coalition governments as the channel for the gradual but certain transformation of the country. The opinion appeared to be that "reform" and "revolution" were not opposite categories, but rather variants and components of the same historical process.²¹

At the AD-Gob party convention in early June, 1963, Raúl Leoni, an old party stalwart, won enough support among the delegates to be named candidate for the presidency on the second ballot. Leoni, two years older than President Betancourt, seemed to lack charisma and reportedly was not the choice of Betancourt. But Leoni had long worked within the party ranks--he had been president of the Student Federation of the "Generation of 1928" and in later years head of

²¹ Philip B. Taylor, Jr., "Democracy for Venezuela?" Current History, LI (November, 1966), 284-290, 310; Martz, Acción Democrática, pp. 366-384.

the party's powerful labor bureau. His image as the working-man's friend was reinforced by a popular feeling that he was also interested in the welfare of the campesino and that he would carry on Betancourt's programs. This included the extension of the welfare program, agrarian reform, and an increase of the national share in the development and marketing of natural resources.

Leóni stated the broad goals of the AD during his formal acceptance speech and he gave further details in his subsequent Program of Government.²² As the standard bearer for the government party, Leóni placed strong emphasis on the maintenance and consolidation of the democratic system. Extremist parties could be reintegrated in the national political life once they abandoned their subversive and terroristic tactics. The AD platform further urged the strengthening of international cooperation, defense of the principle of self-determination, and determined opposition toward totalitarian systems of the Right or of the Left. By implication, the Betancourt Doctrine of nonrecognition of unconstitutional governments was upheld.

There was also a continuing commitment to government intervention in the national economy, the responsibility of the government in the promotion of economic development, expansion of social security, and in the strengthening of labor's rights. Agrarian reform would be continued and

²² Acción Democrática, Programa de Gobierno (Caracas: Italográfica, 1963).

expanded. Industrialization would aim at a curtailment of imports at the same time that it would mean greater employment of Venezuelans and the utilization of the country's resources. Finally, institutional reforms were to include an administrative strengthening of the states, as Leoni often reiterated during his tours through the interior.

This program and its candidate and party sponsors were embraced by the Venezuelan electorate. The feared Communist-inspired boycott of the elections did not take place and Leoni called the general quiet atmosphere a demonstration of civic patriotism.²³ His victory, however, pointed to a lessening of AD's hold upon the populace from its 1958 height. The continuing domination by the still-undefeated Acción Democrática was sharply reduced. Leoni, though an easy winner, received only 32.8% of the total vote in comparison to Betancourt's 1958 victory with 49.2% of the votes. This general drop was matched by congressional returns, with the party falling from 49.5% in 1958 to only 32.2% in 1963. Acción Democrática held 21 of 45 Senate seats and 65 of the 177 in the lower house. This was a drop from 1958's 32 of 51 in the Senate and 73 of the 133 in the Chamber.²⁴

These results could also indicate that AD's return to power through overwhelming electoral choice in the late

²³El Universal, December 1, 1963, p. 1.

²⁴From official returns as published in El Nacional (December 13, 1963), p. A-1ff.

1958 elections was somewhat deceptive in that it obscured the differences existent in the ideological orientation and the organizative bases²⁵ between this party and other relatively large partisan entities in Venezuela and with which AD had worked closely during the underground struggle.

In 1958 the overwhelming vote given Betancourt could be interpreted not only as a tribute to his leadership, his political acumen and popular appeal, but it could also be seen as a victory granted Acción Democrática for its position of superior strength among the other political organizations in the resistance to Pérez Jiménez. In 1958 AD was reaping the fruits of its efforts to integrate elements with various ideological orientations into a united struggle to undermine

²⁵ The literature on AD's origins, ideology, and structure is extensive. Among them, Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa; Acción Democrática, Ratificación de Principios Teóricos de Orientación Programática Normativos de AD (Caracas: Secretaría de Prensa y Propaganda, 1958); Rodolfo José Cárdenas, La Insurrección Popular en Venezuela (Caracas: Ediciones Catatumbo, 1961)--a critical view, heavily favoring COPEI (i.e., social-Christian Party, Comité Pro Organización Popular Electoral Independiente), over AD; Gabaldón, El "Partido Demócrata Venezolano" y su Proceso (Documentos); Joaquín Gabaldón Marquez, Archivos de una Inquietud Venezolana (Caracas, 1955); Gallegos et al., Rómulo Betancourt, Interpretación de su Doctrina Popular y Democrática; David León, Por donde Vamos--critical, pro-López Contreras; López Contreras, El Triunfo de la Verdad--critical, supporting the general's views that AD was actually undemocratic and Communist-leaning; Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos; Martz, Acción Democrática: Evolution of a Modern Political Party; Osorio, Democracia en Venezuela; Servicio Secreto de Investigación, La Verdad de las Actividades Comunistas en Venezuela. Relación y Parte de la Numerosa Documentación que Posee el Servicio Secreto de Investigación Acerca de la Realidad de la Propaganda Comunista dentro del País (Caracas: Litografía y Tipografía del Comercio, 1936), purports to document the links between ORVE and the Communists; Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela: Its Origin and Development; and, of course, the extensive writings of Rómulo Betancourt, already cited in the course of this dissertation.

and unseat the dictator. By 1963 the ideological and organizative differences between AD and other influential Venezuelan political groupings had come to the surface in a vigorous campaign for the presidency and for the Congress. It is for this reason that a critical examination of AD in the context of Venezuelan contemporary political ideologies and institutions can be focused justifiably around the events culminating in the 1963 electoral context and casting their shadow on the Leoni government.²⁶

The general elections that took place in Venezuela in December, 1963, differed from those of 1958 in that they constituted not only a reaffirmation of the democratic representative principle and thus a repudiation of dictatorial formulas but also a transcendental decision that the nation took on what path the democratic regime should now proceed in the social and economic aspects.

In 1958, at the overthrow of the dictatorship, Venezuela's population appeared unanimous in its desire to prevent a return to despotism, no matter at what cost of each of the several political parties which had fought, side by side, in the underground. Thus, the differences in the appreciation of the social and economic content of the new regime were relegated to a secondary level, while to the forefront

²⁶Salvador Ruz, "Análisis de las Elecciones Venezolanas," *Este & Oeste*, II (February 1-15, 1964), 11-14. A realignment of forces within AD as the 1968 presidential elections approached is reviewed in *infra*, chaps. V, X.

came the overwhelming desire to assure "forever" at least the minimum of freedom and popular representation. The national unity that prevailed during the 1958 provisional government of Wolfgang Larrazabal,²⁷ and the so-called Pact of Punto Fijo--through which the three most important parties (AD, COPEI, URD) committed themselves to collaborate with each other after the elections, no matter who would be the winning candidate²⁸--were a clear reflection of the popular determination to free the country from its tormented past, a past torn between chaotic government and despotic "order," between local caudillos and national military strongmen.

In 1963 Venezuela found itself in a distinct situation from that prevailing in 1958. The democratic system of representation appeared to have been consolidated in the preceding five years. In spite of subversive movements bent upon bringing the country back to a dictatorial regime of the Right or of the Left, the majority of the population went to the polls and overwhelmingly selected candidates

²⁷ Numa Quevedo, El Gobierno Provisorio: 1958 (Caracas: Pensamiento Vivo, 1963), especially pp. 99-118, 179-193. Quevedo was interior minister in the interim government that ruled Venezuela between the fall of Pérez Jiménez and the inauguration of constitutionally elected President Betancourt.

²⁸ Acción Democrática, Pacto Suscrito el 31 de Octubre de 1958 y Declaración de Principios y Programa Mínimo de Gobierno de los Candidatos a la Presidencia de la República en la Elección del Día 7 de Diciembre de 1958 (Caracas: La Nación, 1958).

presented by the three largest and most moderate parties, the AD, COPEI, and URD. These three parties had also made up the governmental coalition for all or part of the 1959-1963 period.

In contrast to 1958, the question in 1963 was not to vote for democracy against despotism, but to determine which type of democracy would be the most desirable to the majority in a subsequent period. In 1963 different classes and social sectors in Venezuela freely expressed their particular interests and orientations. The need to maintain a unity of purpose and of action had disappeared; in 1958 this need was crucial, in 1963 it could be dispensed with. Thus, at first glance, it would appear that the nation was more divided in the electoral campaign of 1963 than in that of 1958. Yet, these very divisions of opinion could be taken as a symptom of maturity and as an indication that Venezuela had advanced in the democratic path sufficiently that it could now permit itself the luxury of allowing free rein to internal differences. While in 1958 such divisions might possibly have signaled the disintegration of the newly emerged constitutional system, in 1963 they were an essential expression of this same constitutionalism.

This new political atmosphere is at the core of the following survey of the major political ideologies and programs in present day Venezuela. A central theme to be pursued is that though differences of opinion flourished

as to priorities and methods, there was in 1963 enough of a consensus on the desirability of the form of political activity experienced between 1958-1962 to ensure the continuation of this same form, a form that contained not only a vigorous party structure but also a recognizable body of principles that governed this structure internally as well as in its relations with other party structures and party ideologies.

In summary, the Venezuelan voter could choose in 1963 from the following alternatives:

- (a) a turn to the Right and toward a preponderance of the sector of private capitalism
- (b) predominance of a social Christian political current
- (c) obtaining of power by Center-Left currents, then in opposition to the government
- (d) a turn toward positions similar to Fidel Castro's Communism
- (e) a reaffirmation of confidence in the governmental party, AD, of the democratic Left.²⁹

The Right³⁰

During most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

²⁹Peter Snow, "The Political Party Spectrum in Venezuela," Caribbean Studies, IV (January, 1965), 36-47.

³⁰The author, somewhat arbitrarily, will use the terms Right, Left, and Center. Though considered vague and impressionistic by some political writers, these terms have the advantage of brevity, use by many scholars, and general popular acceptance and understanding. To avoid confusion, as used here, they can be further clarified. By Right we mean the socioeconomic forces that give priority to the principles of authority and order above those of equality and popular self-determination, and that affirm that the national economy should be ruled by private rather than

the conservative forces in Venezuela acted at the margin of constitutionality, imposing their will or fighting for power through conspiracy or coups. These forces carried various labels--Conservative and Liberal being the best known and most durable but these labels had little descriptive value as a means of clarifying their ideological and programmatic orientation. Almost without exception, these forces represented the landed aristocracy, the victorious caudillo of the day, and the Catholic hierarchy. Almost without exception they governed by and for themselves.

Since the terminology of the French Revolution was in common and widespread usage, these forces too used that terminology to cover their own interests or to cloak their own means to achieve and retain power with the respectability of legitimacy, of power emanating from the people. Thus, no matter which Conservatives governed, they all exalted the patria, the pueblo, and libertad; they all called for democracia, for federalismo, for justicia. More often than not, rival conservative groups battled each other using these terms as their banners. No one seemed overly concerned to seek what was meant by these slogans, much less how they

public power. By Left we understand the forces that stress equality and the dominance of the interests of the lower classes and that advocate an economic order in which the public sector predominates over the private sector. The Center is a position situated between these two extremes and taking some characteristics from both. The author further wishes to stress that her usage of these terms agrees with their usage by Venezuelan writers. See Boersner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," pp. 73-96.

could be adapted to the Venezuelan reality.³¹

After the death of the dictator Gómez in 1935, the conservative elements tried for some time to act through the Partido Nacional and through the Asociaciones Bolivarianas which had appeared in the political scene in order to fight the leftist movements,³² most particularly the AD precursors--the ORVE and the PDN.

There is little doubt, however, that in general the latifundista groups or those of the financial oligarchy tended to mistrust any partisan organizations using pressures of an economic kind, or even personal or military pressures to make their viewpoints prevail over the governments that succeeded Gómez. Thus, under the regimes of Generals López Contreras and Medina Angarita, the defenders and holders of economic and social privileges acted largely as pressure groups rather than as formalized political parties.

The overthrow of Medina Angarita by Acción Democrática and a group of dissident military officers inaugurated a period of experimentation with mass democracy. For the first time in Venezuelan history, the 1945 coup made it possible for the people to participate in the governing process; there

³¹Venezuela, Presidencia de la República, Pensamiento Político Venezolano del Siglo XIX, Vols. I-XV (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1961); Mijares, "La Evolución Política de Venezuela (1810-1960)," in Picón-Salas et al., Venezuelan Independiente, 1810-1960, pp. 23-156.

³²Eduardo Picón Lares, Ideología Bolivariana (Caracas: Editorial Crisol, 1944); López Contreras, El Triunfo de la Verdad, passim.

was a conscious effort at political propaganda, at holding of election campaigns, at making the masses aware of their new role in government, no longer as passive subjects or bystanders, but as participants in the new order.³³

Challenged by this powerful and eminently successful organization of labor and peasants by Acción Democrática, the conservative sectors sought recourse in their traditional role of conspirators and ultimate determiners of Venezuelan governments. But along with this time-honored device, these forces emulated AD by organizing themselves within the framework of partisan politics. They grouped themselves mainly around the Social Christian Party COPEI (Comité Pro Organización Popular Electoral Independiente),³⁴ which had a Rightist character at the time. This partisan organization of the conservative forces was an innovation in Venezuelan history for they had until then preferred to protect their interests on an individual basis or, at most, as a pressure group.

From this rightist stance, COPEI was destined to evolve to more progressive positions in relation to social

³³Venezuela, Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno, El Gobierno Revolucionario de Venezuela ante su Pueblo; Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 1-71.

³⁴The Right in Venezuela has historically preferred to view itself as politically "independent." This preference is reflected in the original party label of the Social Christians and is apparent again in other political groupings, with a rightist character, which will be discussed subsequently.

justice and economic equality. Several factors contributed to this move toward the center of the political spectrum. With the advent of Pérez Jiménez, the dictatorship absorbed the most militant and intransigent rightists within COPEI,³⁵ leaving this party in the hands of elements who favored a modern and progressive policy of social justice for all Venezuelans. These progressive elements many times found themselves fighting in the underground along with AD. Finally, in the late 1950's and early 1960's COPEI was heavily influenced by the reformist papal encyclicals of John XXIII³⁶ and by the leftism characteristic of other social Christians, especially those from Chile.³⁷

In short, all these factors--alienation of far-Right elements within its ranks, emergence of a younger and more progressive-minded group of social Christians who had suffered during the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, and the impact of Church doctrines and of other Social Christian parties largely

³⁵There seems to have existed an overall good understanding between Pérez Jiménez and COPEI during most of the 1948-1958 dictatorship. See Vallenilla Lanz, Escrito de Memoria, p. 177; Rodríguez (ed.), Quién Derrocó a Gallegos? pp. 11-225. For points of divergence between COPEI and Pérez Jiménez, see Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 38-42.

³⁶W. G. Gibbons, Great Papal Encyclicals (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1964), pp. 1-20, 203-254.

³⁷Congresos Internacionales Demócrata-Cristianos (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1957), *passim*; Robert J. Alexander, "The Rise of Latin American Christian Democracy," New Politics, III (Fall, 1964), 76-84.

concerned with social welfare--transformed COPEI from a conservative party with strong Church ties and with a preoccupation with "order" and "private" rather than "public" enterprise to an essentially pragmatic and even reformist party after 1958.³⁸

This evolution was destined to push COPEI from its original rightist position to one perhaps best classified as center-Left. Reflecting the new trend, the statements of the Social Christian leaders after 1958 have shown a startling contrast with their restrictive preoccupation with Church-state relations that marked the earlier stages of the party ideology. Rafael Caldera, who has long been the foremost national leader of COPEI, speaks in a tone illustrative of the new orientation:

Today, as Latin America stands at a dramatic fork in the road of history, Christian Democrats are spokesmen for the distress--and hopes--of millions of Latin Americans. The social dilemmas of our continent cannot be solved by half-hearted reforms, nor can we wait until a gradual revolution brings the social justice that our masses demand with increasing vehemence.³⁹

COPEI has worked hard in its attempts to change the impression of many Venezuelans that it is a reactionary and Church-oriented organization. Again Caldera has been the

³⁸ John D. Martz, "Political Parties in Colombia and Venezuela: Contrasts in Substance and Style," Western Political Quarterly, XVIII, Pt. I (June, 1965), 329-330; Boesner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," p. 75.

³⁹ Rafael Caldera, "The Christian Democratic Idea," America, CVII (April 7, 1962), 13.

most outspoken in these attempts--

Christian Democrat parties are not confessional. Among their members are citizens of many religious faiths and even agnostics. For all of them Christianity is a source of inspiration and a stimulus to new approaches to the service of mankind. It most certainly is not an ecclesiastical discipline to be imposed upon political parties.⁴⁰

It should be noted, however, that not all copeianos have concurred with Caldera. The change in the character of COPEI from a moderately conservative Catholic movement to an evolving Christian Democratic party in the internationally accepted sense of the word has not been immediately or unanimously embraced by all the party's members. In the first few years after 1958, a considerable residue of conservatism persisted, especially on the state and local levels. This residue was often buttressed by clerical attacks upon the nationally dominant Acción Democrática and their exhortation to their parishioners to avoid the "AD-comunistas" and to vote for COPEI candidates.⁴¹

While this rightist current has persisted, in another wing of the party, especially the youth movement, an opposite tendency has been manifest. It is felt that of the two, the latter has steadily grown more dominant in the national councils of the party and that it has been greatly responsible for pushing the center of gravity of the party slowly to the Left. Caught between strong pressures from the national party

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 15.

⁴¹Personal interview, Alberto Newman, Mérida (AD-CES President), October 15, 1965. See Appendix.

leaders above and from the militant youth below, parochial sentiment has steadily declined while the social content of the party platforms and programs has increased.⁴²

The overall consequence from an ideological viewpoint is that since 1958 COPEI no longer has been the true representative of conservatism, and once more the Right in Venezuela has found itself without an organized political expression.

Meanwhile, as COPEI ceased to be a spokesman for the Venezuelan Right, the governmental programs of President Betancourt of necessity came to clash with powerful established interests. The nationalistic oil policy of his government, by denying new concessions and imposing controls upon the activities of the oil companies, implied a relative weakening of the propertied sectors before the State and also an inevitable discontent of the powerful internationalistic groups which had until then dominated rather freely the national economy. Also, the great expansion in power and in numbers of the labor movement under the auspices of the democratic government could only worry all entrepreneurs in general, although it is to be noted that the Venezuelan workers defended their class interests with considerable

⁴² Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 84-88; Gonzalo Álvarez, "La Crisis de Copei," Momento, XXXVIII (June 19, 1966), 33-39. See also Rafael Caldera, Libertad y Democracia: Su Vigencia y Proyección Social (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1960). Caldera was, at this time, a member of the AD-URD-COPEI governing coalition and his book was published by the official press.

moderation.⁴³

The AD government's agrarian reform program, in spite of the generous compensations it gave the expropriated latifundistas, did not fail to alarm those with a semifeudal mentality. Even the educational program, which resulted in a doubling of the number of schools and teachers, caused fear among a minority of the "high society" who viewed here yet another encroachment by the "mob" or who feared the total secularization of the educational system. Finally, it was becoming increasingly evident that economic nationalism, development of national industry, and the relatively modest raises in the income tax would come to challenge and to sow panic among various commercial and financial circles.

To complicate matters for the once all-powerful and at times monolithic Right, in the governments of Betancourt and Leoni, a significant phenomenon came to the surface-- the division between the enterprising manufacturing sector, partisan of AD's program for economic nationalism and the expansion of the internal market through structural reform, and a commercial, banking, and mining sector, beneficiary of the previously prevailing order. While the first tended to show itself favorable to the AD governments' experiments, the second constituted the main basis for the conservative opposition to the government and a firm adversary of the

⁴³Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 233-245; Mauro Barrenechea, "Unionism in Venezuela," America, CVII (August 13, 1962), 626.

Betancourt-Leoni brand of economic policy.⁴⁴

This division in Venezuela's traditional Right might well have been the main factor in prompting those opposed to the AD governments to attempt to rival AD by constituting their own political party.⁴⁵ Thus, after 1960 certain political leaders initiated a move to attract and to organize the disaffected conservative elements, those who no longer felt at home in COPEI and who still remained opposed to Acción Democrática. The Independent senator Ramón Escovar Salom created his Movimiento Republicano Progresista (MRP), an organization whose ideological orientation could be classified as Center Right.⁴⁶ Escovar tried to form a new political alliance based on the dissatisfaction of the conservative entrepreneurial sectors with those middle- and labor-class people who felt the brunt of the recession that took place in certain sectors of the economy during Betancourt's first years in office.

⁴⁴There is evidence that some of the adversaries to AD's economic policies became less obstinate in their stand by the time President Leoni initiated his administration. See "Venezuelan Private Enterprise," Latin American Times, October 12, 1965, p. 3.

⁴⁵D. L. Busk, "The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution," International Affairs [London], XLI (October, 1965), 776-778.

⁴⁶Movimiento Republicano Progresista, Manifiesto Constitutivo del Movimiento Republicano Progresista (MRP) (Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Prensa y Propaganda, 1961). Escovar Salom characterized the MRP as "oppositionist and centrist," Documentos (April-June, 1961), p. 723.

Escovar's articles and speeches favored a greater participation of private entrepreneurs both in economic policy making and in the government itself.

A second conservative movement formed was the Asociación Venezolana de Independientes (AVI), founded by important businessmen. The AVI, at its inception, did not pretend to be a political party, but rather a group for public orientation and pressure and as such contained diverse currents and tendencies within itself. This continued true even after it began calling itself Frente Democrático Nacional and presenting the organizational structure of a full-fledged political party. Besides a minority of doctrinaire economic liberals, disciples of Wilhelm Roepke, of Ludwig Von Mises and of Hayeck, there was a majority within AVI-FND which stressed above all the desirability of a sociopolitical order in which the role of free enterprise would be more prominent than that accorded it during the Betancourt and Leoni regimes.⁴⁷

Whether associated with the MRP, the AVI, or truly "independent" by virtue of nonassociation with any particular

⁴⁷ The label chosen by the AVI group is significant in itself. Since the Venezuelan Right is not used to having its own political party, it tends to favor a government by "independents," who are supposedly nonpartisan and undogmatic. An AVI press release concluded that "AVI considered indispensable to remain distinct from political parties. . . . The basis of its power lies in that it is able to represent national interests and not the interests of groups or of factions." Documentos (January-March, 1963), pp. 717-718. The label Frente Democrático Nacional, later assumed by some avistas, again seemed a shying away from a party label and a preference to consider itself a more or less loose organization or front.

group, the Venezuelan sectors oriented toward private capitalism as opposed to state control or the socializing gradualism advocated by Acción Democrática, found their leader and national candidate in the person of Dr. Arturo Uslar Pietri. The reputation of this brilliant economist and author was well known in and out of Venezuela.⁴⁸

As Escovar Salom had done before him, Uslar Pietri declared that Betancourt's "dogmatic" programs were harmful to the nation and that the best way would be to proceed pragmatically, doing the best possible with the use and the help of all sectors of the society.⁴⁹ He stressed the need to attain "the possible Venezuela," a Venezuela in which both free enterprise and government would share the tasks of developing the nation's resources and of improving the living standards.⁵⁰ He specified that there should be no ideological persecution, and it is possible that he would have extended the olive branch to the proscribed terrorists and the political exiles.⁵¹ He devoted much time during his

⁴⁸See Uslar Pietri's preface to Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia, pp. 7-11.

⁴⁹Uslar Pietri's aversion to Betancourt is quite apparent in his critical review of Edwin Lieuwen work on Venezuela. Lieuwen has generally been favorable to AD. See Arturo Uslar Pietri, "La Venezuela de Lieuwen no es, Exactamente, Venezuela," La Nueva Democracia [New York], XLIII (April, 1962), 42-44.

⁵⁰Some of Uslar Pietri's ideas on the role of private enterprise appear in "La Imagen Pública de la Empresa Privada," Economía [Bogotá], I (1964), 224-230.

⁵¹Late in 1966 Uslar Pietri was stating that the problem of the guerrillas in Venezuela could only be solved through "politics" not through "police." He seemed to feel that negotiations should be undertaken with Cuba and that the

campaign to calling attention to the importance of Venezuelan youth and its need for vocational education as well as for the utilization of women's talents on a merit basis.⁵² His "policy of sovereignty" called for better public administration, professionalization of the armed forces, closer relations with the countries of the Caribbean and all of Latin America, devotion to democracy and peace, and an enlightened policy of trade with foreign enterprises as well as utilization of foreign capital.⁵³

Six main groups came to the support of Uslar Pietri in 1963: the MRP of Escobar Salom; small political groups of rightist orientation; independent personalities with links with former president Medina; independent professionals and entrepreneurs; some reactionary elements identified with the historical current of Gómez-Pérez Jiménez; and the peasant electoral committees created by Ramón Quijada, former peasant leader of AD, who had left that group in December of 1961.

The members of AVI, the majority of whom individually favored Uslar Pietri, decided not to support him collectively,

"pacification" of Venezuela could be obtained by negotiations with Cuba and with the guerrillas themselves; see "Disposición a Negociar la Pacificación," El Nacional, November 27, 1966, p. A-1.

⁵² Arturo Uslar Pietri, "La Impostergable Reforma de Nuestra Educación," Boletín de la Academia Nacional de Historia [Caracas], XLVI (April-June, 1963), 270-278.

⁵³ Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pt. II, pp. 35-46.

as he probably had counted upon. In their convention in early September, 1963, the Avistas decided not to support any candidate as a group. This may be explained by the fact that many Avistas felt that a vote for Uslar would be a "wasted" vote, since his possibilities of success seemed small when compared with the great electoral power of the large political parties such as AD, COPEI, and URD (Unión Republicana Democrática). Thus, the main forces on which Uslarismo could count were those from the capitalist sectors and of the middle class, who saw in this candidate the personification of their ideal of order, moderation, and economic liberalism. It seems clear that Uslar failed in his attempts to penetrate deeply into the political awareness of the urban (especially in cities other than Caracas), rural, and labor groups in spite of the considerable efforts of Quijada in this respect.

Uslar Pietri ran fourth in the presidential election of 1963, receiving 460,240 votes, or 16.08% of the total votes cast.⁵⁴ Although defeated for the presidency, he was reelected Senator from the Federal District of Venezuela. To underline the Venezuelan Right's difficulties in acquiring and maintaining a national spokesman for its interests, Uslar subsequently (1964) joined the gobierno de ancha base of President Leoni. Thus, this writer, academician, and brilliant

⁵⁴The 1963 election results that appear in this section are the official returns as published in El Nacional, December 13, 1963, pp. A-1ff.

Venezuelan economist who had held key posts during López Contreras' and Medina Angarita's administrations, was now working in cooperation with the political party most responsible for the overthrow of Medina's and Uslar's own temporary political eclipse during most of the 1940's.⁵⁵

While the majority of the conservatives failed in their efforts to protect their interests through support of the candidacy of Uslar Pietri, a minuscule band of perezjimenistas on the Far Right formed the electorally insignificant Partido Nacionalista Auténtico (PAN).⁵⁶ Another extremist faction followed Germán Borregales, nominee of the Movimiento de Acción Nacional (MAN). This small party, which had been carrying on an intense vilification campaign against the Betancourt regime on the grounds of its alleged "communism," completely failed in attempting to convince many to accept its conclusions--Borregales received less than 0.32% of the total presidential vote (9,324 votes).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ When Uslar Pietri broke with Leoni in 1966 over the debate on new taxes, the Venezuelan Right found itself without any sympathizer-spokesman at the highest levels of government administration. That the Leoni government was able to weather this break, with certain sectors of the Right finding themselves further isolated, seemed to indicate that the popular basis of the Leoni government was broad enough and counted with enough military support to withstand the frank hostility of these Rightist sectors. See New York Times, December 9, 1966, p. 31.

⁵⁶ The PAN, along with other minor parties, the Movimiento Republicano Progresista, the Movimiento Electoral Nacional Independiente, Opinión Nacional, Partido Socialista Venezolana, and Cruzada Electoral Popular Agrupación Social received only 1.3% of the total congressional vote. Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pt. II, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution,

In summary, when viewed in the context of Venezuelan political ideologies and programs, the Right represented a very small portion of the spectrum. With COPEI leaving the Right and moving toward a Center-Left position, and with its most promising spokesman, Uslar Pietri, lost for a time to an Acción Democrática governmental coalition, the conservatives in Venezuela found themselves relegated to a minor fraction of the electoral vote. On the other hand, their electoral weakness should not obscure their very important role in the determining of policies at the national level and it has not been coincidental that both Betancourt and Leoni have gone to great lengths to avoid a complete showdown with conservative elements and organizations. Some of the key ministerial positions have been filled with men known to be acceptable to the oil-business-landholding elite. For their part, these conservative elements and organizations have tempered their most extreme demands and have sought a mutually advantageous modus vivendi with Acción Democrática.⁵⁸ Only diehard perezjimenistas and others of extreme rightist sentiment have sought to undermine or overthrow the government, either on their own, or through an alliance with disaffected military

pp. 134-135. Borregales has contributed regularly to the Caracas daily *La Esfera*, owned by Miguel Angel Capriles. Capriles, a millionaire opportunist, has at various times supported Pérez Jiménez, Betancourt, and again the far Right. His paper was closed for a period during the Betancourt administration because of its vitriolic articles inciting the people against the government.

⁵⁸ Further aspects of this modus vivendi between AD and a large part of the Venezuelan Right are explored in subsequent chapters.

(especially Army and Air Force) elements.⁵⁹

The Center-Left

In the Venezuelan elections of 1963 there were three candidates whose ideological orientation was essentially democratic-reformist and whose program did not differ substantially from that of COPEI or AD, but who nonetheless criticized certain aspects of the AD government and who accused the AD coalition of having failed to fulfill its many promises. These three candidates were Dr. Jóvito Villalba of the Unión Republicana Democrática (URD), Dr. Raúl Ramos Giménez of the oppositionist faction of AD, and vice-admiral Wolfgang Larrazábal who became the presidential candidate of the Frente Democrático Popular (FDP) and of certain independent sectors.

Larrazábal, who had attended the U.S. Naval School in Miami and who had been retired for a short time after the 1945 revolution, emerged suddenly on the Venezuelan political scene on January 23, 1958. A series of circumstances, which he himself probably had not expected, led him to become president of the Junta that ousted Pérez Jiménez. A capable naval officer, Larrazábal had been able to keep himself from any personal commitment to the dictator, in whose overthrow he actively participated in late 1957-early 1958.⁶⁰

⁵⁹The latest attempt came in October, 1966. "Pro-Jiménez Military Coup Fails in Venezuela," Washington Daily News (October 31, 1966), p. 21; Virginia Prewett, "Venezuela's Leoni is Solid Despite Rumors," Washington Daily News (November 7, 1966), p. 25.

⁶⁰Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, a close adviser to the

Initially of a moderately conservative orientation, Larrazábal had moved toward the Center-Left as the 1958 revolution pushed the provisional government to take more democratic and socialistic positions. He had the undisputed merit of presiding over and coordinating the Junta's rule and the early preparations toward free elections. At the same time, his colorful personality--he liked to play the guitar--exerted a powerful fascination for a large number of lower-class Caraqueños. His martial and youthful bearing, his friendly and uninhibited manner, made him appear to the Caraqueños as the symbol and the personification of the freedom and hope that had been born on the dawn of January 23 with the crumbling of the dictatorship. Not so much from demagogic calculation as from an ignorance of economics, Larrazábal used to listen to and to personally satisfy the most diverse requests for help. This attitude was largely responsible for his "emergency plan," a financially ruinous program under which the government gave food and help to thousands of unemployed. Instead of solving the unemployment problem, it served almost solely to attract a new influx of rural migrants to the cities at the same time that it practically exhausted the treasury.

Having resigned from the Junta, Larrazábal campaigned as a presidential candidate with the support of the URD and the then-legal Communist Party. He won overwhelmingly in Caracas but received few votes elsewhere. His performance as

dictator, had no favorable comments to make about Larrazábal; see Vallenilla Lanz, Escrito de Memoria, p. 213.

a provisional president had attracted for him the strong support of the poor in Caracas--those who were the major beneficiaries of the "emergency plan"--as well as the support of those who backed him in order to undermine Betancourt's chances. To the latter, made up of certain sectors of the bourgeoisie, Betancourt was by far the greatest threat to their interests.

Thus, as in previous occasions in Venezuelan political history, diverse groups from the Right, from the Center, from the moderate and democratic Left, and from the extreme Left united behind a flexible candidate in the hope that they could bend him to their own peculiar ideologies and to their own particular interests. What united these various groups in 1958 was antiadequismo, a fear that once in power the AD would undermine or neglect their interests.

Having received 35% of the total vote, largely from Caracas, Larrazábal, to his credit, urged his followers to accept the election results and to consider Betancourt the President for all Venezuelans. After serving as an ambassador during the Betancourt administration, Larrazábal returned to the country and decided to become a presidential candidate in 1963. He received the support of independents, some conservatives, and a party of the Left, the Fuerza Democrática Popular (FDP), created by Jorge Dáger, a former adeco and later active in the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR).

Larrazábal's 1963 platform, reflecting perhaps the

diversity of those supporting him, contained somewhat contradictory statements. On the one hand it called for general amnesty for all; on the other hand, it expressed the need to prevent acts of terrorism. It would eliminate the police force--as well as reorganize the police department. It would preserve the juridical system--as well as place the country in a state of constitutional emergency until it could effectively follow the laws. Freedom of religion would be granted--but special consideration would be given to the Catholic Church.⁶¹

Larrazábal's avowed program contained several ideological strains, ranging all the way from the far Left (e.g., a clear call for relations with all Latin-American countries, presumably including Cuba; amnesty for the terrorists) to Center (support of the Constitution, social security, moderate reforms) to the far Right (special concessions to the Catholic Church). It reflected the diversity of his support, but his showing at the polls seemed to indicate that his support had become extremely shallow.

His long absence from the country had made him lose his former close contact with the people. Perhaps more significantly, in contrast to 1958, in the 1963 campaign Larrazábal no longer had the support of the URD. His votes, 275,304 represented only 9.4% of the total cast. The FDP

⁶¹ Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pt. II, pp. 47-54.

and the MENI (the small Movimiento Electoral Nacional Independiente headed by Larrazábal's brother retired Admiral Carlos Larrazábal) managed to elect only four senators and 16 deputies and finished well behind AD, COPEI, URD, and Uslar Pietri.⁶² It was obvious that many Caraqueños who had formerly given their votes to him now preferred Uslar Pietri⁶³ while in the countryside Larrazábal failed again to win any measure of widespread backing. As early as the fall of 1965 he had decided to run in the presidential elections in 1968, but his chances of doing any better than previously seemed very slim.

Another contender of the Center-Left Opposition in 1963 was Raúl Ramos Giménez. Ramos Giménez and his followers had initially made up a distinct opinion group within AD. Since 1947, when for the first time they had come in conflict with the Old Guard in the leadership of AD, they had been unofficially designated the ARS group"-- a reference to a well known Venezuelan advertising company that used as its slogan "permit us to think for you." The arsistas, young and ambitious, felt themselves called upon to replace the so-called Old Guard which surrounded

⁶² Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 133, 135; Movimiento Electoral Nacional Independiente, Normas para la Orientación Organizativa del Comité "Catuche" pro Candidatura del Contra-Almirante Wolfgang Larrazábal a la Presidencia Constitucional de la República (Caracas, 1958).

⁶³ This was confirmed in personal interviews in Caracas, Spring of 1964; see Appendix.

Betancourt, Leoni, and other party stalwarts. They claimed that they could better understand the Venezuelan youth (which, incidentally, made up over half the country's population) and that it was impossible for the AD leaders of the 1926 Generation vintage to communicate with this large sector of the population.

Expelled from the AD in 1948 for indiscipline, the *arsistas* had rejoined the *adeco* forces during the underground struggle against Pérez Jiménez. In this struggle they fought side by side with Old Guard elements and they too suffered many casualties in their ranks. Some young activists, who would later follow former AD leader Domingo Alberto Rangel in the formation of the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*, were at that time closely associated with the *arsistas*.

After the liberation of the country in 1958, the *arsistas*, who during the 1947-1948 period had argued with the AD Old Guard over questions relative to federalism and to the role of the military, found new motives for dissidence. At the national AD convention of 1961, the *arsistas* became the spokesmen for those who were less than happy with AD. These were people who resented the fact that AD, as the party in power, could no longer talk of "liberation" but rather of "consolidation." They also resented the need of governmental coalitions and, above all, they wanted to seize the control of AD and, eventually become the leaders and the candidates in the 1963 elections. Thus, when the *arsistas* split from AD in 1961, the clash came not because of basic

ideological differences, but as a consequence of strong personal divergencies between the Old Guard led by Betancourt and the young men led by the ambitious Ramos Giménez.⁶⁴

As Acción Democrática in the Opposition (AD-Op, later also known as Vanguardia Revolucionaria Nacional, VRN), Ramos Giménez' followers, along with the peasant leader Ramón Quijada--who later abandoned the VRN to support Uslar Pietri--unleashed a strong campaign against the government, against Betancourt, and against Leoni. They accused them of disloyalty to their electoral promises and of abandoning their revolutionary faith. Ramos Giménez and his party continued using the style and the language of AD, and for this reason, their criticism of the government party was often contradictory. Further, this ambiguity makes it difficult to ascertain whether the Ramos Giménez group is actually more to the Left of AD, that it should be considered more revolutionary than the governmental party, or simply that it is a vehicle for the ambitious young men. Most observers seem to agree that the latter is closer to the true nature of the VRN.

AD-Op directed its efforts toward gaining the same

⁶⁴Personal interviews, Caracas, Spring, 1964; see Appendix. In Documentos (October-December, 1961), pp. 561-588, 766-771 one finds extensive documentation on the AD-ARS split. Reliable sources also reported that prior to their own split with AD, the aristas were the most insistent that the leftist adecos led by Rangel be expelled from the AD. The bitterness between the miristas followers of Rangel and the aristas was particularly evident in the youth sector of AD.

electoral clientelle that provided the basis for Acción Democrática--the peasants and labor--but failed miserably in this campaign. It seemed as though the strength of the arsisistas resided in their ability to organize from above and to create the apparatus for direction in a relatively short time. But they remained incapable of bringing or unwilling to bring into being a substantial militant basis from below, in spite of the considerable efforts of the peasant leader Quijada before he went over to the Uslar Pietri camp.⁶⁵ In part the arsisista failure could be explained by the fact that labor leaders remained overwhelmingly loyal to the AD Old Guard, to the government party that was now providing better conditions to the working men, and to the very same party that was destined to choose as its 1963 presidential candidate an old labor leader, Raúl Leoni. For the arsisistas, the inability to steal any support from AD backers meant a dismal showing at the polls. Ramos Giménez obtained 66,837 votes or 2.3% of the total cast. His party elected one senator and six deputies.⁶⁶

Far more important in the 1963 Center-Left Opposition

⁶⁵ John D. Powell, Preliminary Report on the Federación Campesina de Venezuela: Origins, Organization, Leadership and Role in the Agrarian Reform Program (Madison, Wis.: Land Tenure Center, 1964), pp. 28-31.

⁶⁶ El Nacional, December 13, 1963, p. A-1ff; Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pt. II, pp. 55-64.

than Ramos Giménez or Larrazábal, was the old democratic leader Jóvito Villalba, whose strong Unión Republicana Democrática (URD) was destined to be a serious contender in the election campaign. Villalba, like Betancourt, Leoni, Gonzalo Barrios, Beltran Prieto, Gustavo Machado, and other important political leaders, belonged to the famous "Generation of 1928" which marked the watershed of Venezuelan political organizations.⁶⁷ He had been prominent in the student group that in 1928 had fomented the most important revolt against the Gómez dictatorship;⁶⁸ with Betancourt and Leoni he had been a militant member of the ORVE and the Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN, the AD immediate predecessor) that had been formed shortly after Gómez' death in 1935. Villalba, in contrast to Betancourt and Leoni, had supported the government of General Medina in the 1940's. After Medina's overthrow, a number of Villalba's friends had formed the URD in March of 1946. Among these men were Elías Toro, Isaac Pardo, Reyes Baena, Inocente Palacios (a former PDN member and adeco and later considered a Communist) who were instrumental in inviting Villalba to become the Secretary General of the new party. Late in 1947 the founders of the URD withdrew from politics; it was widely rumored at the time that they had left URD because they resented Villalba's intransigence in the

⁶⁷Martz, "The Generation of 1928: Genesis of Venezuelan Democracy," pp. 17-33.

⁶⁸Villalba, "La Federación de Estudiantes y la Reforma Universitaria en Venezuela," pp. 260-264.

running of the party.⁶⁹ To compensate the loss of his former friends, other seasoned political figures remained at the side of Villalba--Ignacio Luis Arcaya, later a Venezuelan Supreme Court Justice, Jorge Figarella, Humberto Bartoli, and Juan Manuel Domínguez Chacín.⁷⁰

The elements that made up the basis of the URD membership came from former pedevistas (members of General Medina's party, the PDV), as well as from other political currents. This attraction of the URD to pedevistas was not surprising in view of the fact that the URD leadership had supported many of the policies of the former president. Under the slogan "government of integration," Villalba campaigned extensively throughout the country in order to build up the URD. In spite of his efforts, the bulk of support remained in the Oriente, the eastern section of Venezuela from which Villalba and many other urredistas had originally come. Climaxing the 1947 campaign, the URD was able to gain four seats in the Chamber of Deputies and two in the Senate. It did not present a presidential candidate at that time.⁷¹

Following the coup of November 24, 1948, and the

⁶⁹Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 165-168.

⁷⁰Domínguez Chacín became the historian-theoretician of URD. See J. M. Domínguez Chacín, El Partido Político; Estructura y Organización de Unión Republicana Democrática (2 vols.; Caracas, 1961), and Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 219-220.

⁷¹Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 167-170.

overthrow of President Gallegos, URD as well as COPEI had been consulted by the new government and both parties were permitted to continue their activities, while AD was proscribed. Two days after their meeting with the military Junta, the URD made public declarations to the press calling for the immediate holding of elections. Later, when a Commission on the writing of electoral statutes had been formed, URD leaders Villalba and Arcaya were present as representatives of their party.

In 1951, as a consequence of certain criticisms of the political repression of the government, URD leaders and members became targets for governmental persecution. Until that time the URD had been cooperating with the regime and had joined the government in the denunciation of the underground opposition made up largely of AD members. The only break had come on November 14, 1950, the day after Delgado Chalbaud's assassination, when the URD had clandestinely circulated a manifesto critical of Pérez Jiménez. This in turn had provoked the government into detaining the URD National Directory for 15 days. The year 1952 marked a more complete break with the dictator, following contacts between Villalba and Leonardo Ruiz Pineda in late 1951. Pineda, the secretary general of AD, was considered by all the chief of the underground activists. These contacts had led to a pact of "coincidental actions" between AD and URD, in which both groups would mutually support each other. When Pineda was assassinated in late 1952, the URD was responsible for

the wide distribution of a communiqué condemning the governmental violence.⁷²

When the ruling Junta Militar de Gobierno called for elections in November, 1952, the URD presented a full slate of candidates. Shortly before polling day, the underground organization of Acción Democrática decided to throw its support behind the URD. The AD voted for URD everywhere except in the mountain states where they reportedly voted for COPEI. At least partly because of this backing, the URD won the election overwhelmingly. Predictably, however, it was not allowed to enjoy its victory at the polls.⁷³ Its leaders were rounded up by Pérez Jiménez and sent into exile where they remained until the overthrow of the dictatorship early in 1958. During their exile, some contact was maintained between the leadership of both URD and AD, while at home, members of both parties were active in the underground resistance against the dictator.

URD had appeared on the political scene in 1946 as a liberal reformist movement, favoring the unification of all classes in order to obtain a national democratic and non-socialistic transformation of Venezuela. Having a more flexible

⁷² Another secretary general of AD, Antonio Pinto Salinas, was also assassinated by the secret police. The list of known victims of the Seguridad is a long one and among them were several AD leaders. See Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 40, 48.

⁷³ See Vallenilla Lanz' Escrito de Memoria, pp. 159-179 for his interpretation of the events preceding and following Pérez Jiménez' "elections" of 1952.

structure than AD and a less explicit doctrine, URD gained, in the course of time, the support of men both in the conservative as well as in the revolutionary sectors. Villalba, for long the undisputed supreme leader of URD, constituted the axis of its Center-Left orientation, radical but not socialist, around which dissimilar groups and personalities have gravitated. But Villalba has now been showing signs of aging and seems less interested in politics; his heir apparent, Ugarte Pelayo, having committed suicide under mysterious circumstances, the future of URD is far from certain.⁷⁴

The URD, as it emerged after the fall of Pérez Jiménez, contained a variety of elements--as it had been the favorite political organization of the people of the Medina Angarita regime in the 1945-1948 period, it now became the refuge for lower echelon officeholders of the Pérez Jiménez regime after its overthrow in 1958. There were urredistas who had collaborated with the military junta in the repression of Acción Democrática and those who were also anti-labor. There were those who had welcomed the votes from adecos in 1952, votes which had been decisive for the electoral victory of urredista candidates. On the other extreme, there were those who took part between 1945 and 1952 in a dissident

⁷⁴ New York Times, May 20, 1956, p. 9; Philip B. Taylor, Jr., "Progress in Venezuela," pp. 270-274, 308. Taylor concluded that "URD . . . seemed likely to be insignificant in the [1968] elections." (Quote on p. 274.)

Communist Party, the Partido Revolucionario del Proletariado or "Black Communists,"⁷⁵ and who in 1963, although by this time members of the URD (the Communists had been banned from running in the elections), continued their adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideas. Led by Luis Miquilena, who became secretary of organization of the URD, this group played a leading role in the councils of the party in the early post-dictatorship period. Miquilena broke with Villalba in the early 1960's and was later imprisoned after being implicated in a Communist plot.

Finally, a large group of young people who had become politically active during and after the dictatorship years played an important part in the URD during the provisional government of Larrazábal and the earlier portion of the Betancourt governmental coalition. Like the youngest generation of AD, these urredistas had also worked closely with the Communists during the latter part of the dictatorship and were much influenced by the ideas and policies of the PCV. They had a youthful enthusiasm for Cuba and Fidel Castro and a naive hatred for everything American. These attitudes were not shared by most of the older leaders of the URD; the solid group of Center-Left leaders--prominent among them Villalba and Arcaya--continued to exert an over-riding moderating influence within URD.

A party such as this--more to the right of AD in its

⁷⁵Alexander, Communism in Latin America, pp. 263-268.

doctrine and less explicit in the measures of immediate reform that it proposes⁷⁶--is capable of attracting diverse groups. In 1952 it had won the elections with a good assist from Acción Democrática as well as benefiting from the popular reaction against Pérez Jiménez. In 1958, when its presidential candidate had been the colorful and popular Larrázabal, it had shown itself capable of attracting large numbers of the chronically unemployed, which had been brought to the capital by the rural exodus characteristic of the dictatorship years, as well as those who had become the prime beneficiaries of Larrázabal's emergency plan. URD always failed, however, in its attempts to attract organized labor, which remained loyal to AD. It also had failed in gaining widespread peasant support, another mainstay group for AD. Essentially a party of leaders, it had been unable to compete with AD or even with the Communists in winning a large number of members in the labor and peasant sectors.

The various elements making up the URD have not been held together by a common philosophy or ideology. Some of the URD members characterize themselves as "liberals," while others are quite openly Marxists, and still others are forever confused about just what they are. Personal differences with leaders and members of other parties, and the desire for public office have been more important factors in keeping the

⁷⁶ Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pt. II, pp. 23-34.

URD together than ideological consistency.

During the 1963 campaign, it was difficult to differentiate the electoral program of Jóvito Villalba from that of Raúl Leoni, except in the sense that the AD candidate made more detailed and explicit programmatic promises. URD continued to be strong in Caracas, in its middle class sectors, as well as in the capital slums; it remained weak in its labor and peasant sectors. URD's program seemed to indicate that the party was aware that it would be these very sectors, labor and peasant, that would decide the 1963 elections but its promises carried little weight or made a small impact upon these sectors which continued loyal to AD. Jóvito Villalba trailed Leoni and Caldera with 551,120 votes, or 18.9% of the total. The URD elected 7 senators and 29 deputies, again coming behind AD and COPEI.⁷⁷

Following the elections and COPEI's decision no longer to be a partner in a governing coalition with AD, President Leoni persuaded Villalba to help in the formation of a new cabinet. Perhaps to the surprise of both adecos and urredistas, their two parties have remained together until now (early 1968). There are, however, evident pressures from both sides for a severance of the alliance. Among the issues behind these pressures have been the government's policies toward the extreme Left.

⁷⁷ Election results from official returns published in El Nacional, December 13, 1963, pp. A-1ff.

The Extreme Left

In the 1963 elections, the forces of the extreme Left were not permitted to present their own candidates, since the parties that embraced this ideological tendency--the Communist Party and the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR)--were banned from running by an executive decree. This did not mean, however, that the extreme Left did not have a very strong and marked indirect influence upon the elections.⁷⁸

The Communist Party was among the oldest parties in Venezuela. Communist agitation and organization had begun before the end of Gómez' dictatorship. As early as the 1920's there is record of a Venezuelan who had fled the Gómez repression and who had become active in the U.S. Communist Party. This exile, Ricardo Martínez, participated in the Comintern's Sixth Congress at the end of 1928. He subsequently was chosen as the Latin-American resident representative in the Moscow headquarters of the Red International Labor Unions (R.I.L.U.).⁷⁹

The Communist Party was officially organized in Venezuela in 1931. It had its origins among a group of students of the 1928 Generation, many of whom had been deported from Venezuela and lived in exile throughout the Americas. One of the principal figures in this movement was

⁷⁸ Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, World Strength of the Communist Party Organizations (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1967), pp. 186-188.

⁷⁹ Alexander, Communism in Latin America, pp. 253-254.

Rómulo Betancourt, who had sought refuge in Costa Rica where he took an active part in forming that country's Communist Party. He quit this group in 1932.⁸⁰ Other exiled students were instrumental in the forming of the Partido Revolucionario Venezolano, headed by Gustavo Machado, which became a part of the Communists' continental anti-imperialist front organization.⁸¹

Betancourt and Machado came to personify the differences between the groups of Venezuelan revolutionaries. One current was socialistic but also nationalistic in its orientation, the other became ever more identified with Moscow rather than with Venezuela itself.⁸² To both currents, however, the major block to expansion was Gómez. The possibility of any political activity was extremely limited as long as the dictator lived. With Gómez' death

⁸⁰ Rómulo Betancourt, Con Quién Estamos y Contra Quién Estamos (San José, 1932). This was Betancourt's explanation of his break with the CP. There are some authors who feel that Betancourt never "really" broke with the Communists; see, for example, Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, especially pp. 453-457 and Vallenilla Lanz, Escrito de Memoria, *passim*. It should be noted, however, that Vallenilla Lanz was a close associate of Pérez Jiménez and that Lavin's interpretation of the 1945-1954 Venezuelan history is, to say the least, open to many questions.

⁸¹ Partido Comunista Venezolano, La Vida Revolucionaria de Gustavo Machado (Caracas: E.T.C.A., 1946); Alexander, Communism in Latin America, pp. 253-254.

⁸² Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 149-150, 474, points out some of the fundamental differences between the two groups; Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 218, 221.

in December, 1935, the López Contreras' government began to permit a considerable degree of political activity as well as the return of many of the exiles. Most of the opposition elements joined in the formation of the Organización Revolucionaria Venezolana (ORVE) and its successor, the Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN).

As the PDN became more active as an opposition movement, the López Contreras' government became more intent in curtailing it. Many of its leaders were expelled again and the PDN failed to become a legal party. In addition to the difficulties with the government, the PDN was beset by its own internal conflicts between its Communist and noncommunist members. The men around Betancourt insisted that a socialistic revolution or a fundamental transformation of Venezuela could be effected through a representative democracy which sought to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the Venezuelan people. Further, they felt that all ties with the international Communist movement should be broken, an issue that determined the open split between Betancourt and the Machado followers within the PDN.

Leaving the PDN and openly proclaiming themselves members of the Partido Comunista de Venezuela, the Communists supported almost unconditionally the government of General Medina (1941-1945). As the Unión Popular Venezolana, the Communists were free to organize. The 1945 Medina-sponsored constitution allowed them to appear under their own name. In their support of medinismo, the Communists were aligned

with a number of Center-Left elements, including Villalba's followers, all of whom were unanimous in their opposition to Acción Democrática.

When the AD became instrumental in the overthrow of Medina in 1945, the Communists defended the president and opposed the AD-dominated Junta. At that time there were two rival Communist Parties in Venezuela, both legal--the Partido Comunista Venezolano led by the brothers Gustavo and Eduardo Machado and the Communist trade unionists Luis Miquilena and Rodolfo Quintero (the so-called Machamiques); and another faction headed by Juan Bautista Fuenmayor.⁸³

Both factions were agreed in their opposition to the coup d'etat and took up arms to defend the Medina regime, at least in the initial stages. Later, the Fuenmayor faction withdrew from the fight and declared its neutrality; the Machamiques persisted in fighting until it became clear that the AD uprising was entirely successful. Once in power, the Betancourt Junta jailed some Machamiques for a time.⁸⁴ To both Communist groups Betancourt declared that they would be allowed "legitimate political activities" (i.e., nonsubversive)⁸⁵ but he stressed he did not desire to form a front with them. For their part, the Fuenmayor

⁸³For details on this split, see Alexander, Communism in Latin America, pp. 276-

⁸⁴New York Times, December 1, 1945, p. 12.

⁸⁵Ibid., December 12, 1945, p. 15.

group agreed to support conditionally "progressive acts of the . . . government";⁸⁶ the *Mechaniques*, on the other hand, continued to follow an extremist policy, using their power in some unions to call strikes whenever possible and refusing all contacts with the Betancourt regime.

In spite of efforts to unite the factions of the Venezuelan Communist movement, it remained split throughout the AD trienio. The Fuenmayor group came to be known as the "Red Communists," since they adopted that color as their insignia for the 1947 elections while the rival group, led after the defection of Gustavo Machado by Quintero and Miquilena, came to be known as the "Black Communists" for their use of black as their electoral color.⁸⁷ The Black Communists also came to call themselves *Partido Revolucionario del Proletariado*, ultra-Left, and were denounced as Trotskyists by the PCV, in spite of the fact that they never had any organizational ties with the 4th International.

On November 26, 1948, President Gallegos was overthrown by a military coup led by three officers who had originally cooperated with AD in the 1945 revolution (Colonels Carlos Delgado Chalbaud, Marcos Pérez Jiménez, and Felipe Llovera Páez) and who formed a military Junta to run the government. As had previously been the case, the Communist factions took different positions with regard to

⁸⁶ *Hoy* [Havana; a Communist paper] February 13, 1946, p. 1.

⁸⁷ Alexander, Communism in Latin America, pp. 258-265.

the new government. One faction opposed the dictatorship, the other sided with it. The Red Communists went into opposition and saw their newspaper, Tribuna Popular, suppressed by the regime and their party outlawed.

In spite of their attempts to work with AD in the labor sector, the Red Communists' overtures were not welcomed by AD. AD was equally unenthusiastic about accepting the Reds' offer to form a united front with AD against the military Junta.⁸⁸ The Black Communists, on the other hand, although not openly supporting the military regime, did give it their tacit approval. For its part, the military government permitted the Black Communists a great deal of activity, particularly in the labor movement, where the military was above all interested in undermining the previous overwhelming dominance enjoyed by AD. When the government created its own trade union group in 1952, the Movimiento Obrero Sindical Independiente de Trabajadores (MOSIT), it was largely staffed by Communists.⁸⁹

Those Communists who joined the resistance against Pérez Jiménez, gave valuable support to the underground movement, though the largest and most dynamic group here remained Acción Democrática. In many cases, in their fight against the dictator, close links were established between the youth

⁸⁸ Venezuela Democrática (April, 1955), p. 32. This was a regular AD publication in exile. This particular issue was published in Mexico.

⁸⁹ Alexander, Communism in Latin America, pp. 267-268; see also supra, chap. IV, n. 16.

sectors of the PCV and of the AD and these links later contributed to the fact that a good part of AD's youth took doctrinal stands far closer to those of the Communists than the large majority of other AD sectors.

When the dictator was overthrown, the Communists proclaimed the usefulness of a united front of all popular parties. This spirit of accord and its support of constitutional government did not last long, however. In part, the Communists were emboldened to take up an independent and radical course because they were undisputably stronger at the end of the dictatorship than before. In the 1950's an expert on Latin-American Communists and Communism could assert that "the Communists remain a comparatively minor element in the political life of Venezuela."⁹⁰ But their successful play of "dual Communism"--the support and the rejection of dictatorship by different Communist factions--plus the dictatorship's favors towards Communists in order to undermine AD helped them to strengthen their ranks. The ultimate result was that at the end of the dictatorship another expert on Latin-American Communists could affirm that "the Party . . . is one of the strongest on the mainland of Latin America. Party membership has more than tripled to at least thirty thousand and the Communists have demonstrated their ability [in the 1958 elections] to elicit over five times that many votes from the electorate

⁹⁰ Alexander, Communism in Latin America, p. 269.

at large."⁹¹

Though the Communists did relatively well in the elections, their strength was not comparable to that of Acción Democrática which remained the overwhelming popular choice. After failing to gain an influential voice in the Betancourt administration, the hostility against AD as a powerful and successful rival popular movement led the PCV to become increasingly oppositionist.

In the meantime, Cuba had been taken over by Fidel Castro and after 1959 the Venezuelan Communists followed the practice of making tendencious comparisons between Cuba and Venezuela.⁹² They contended that while Fidel's was a "true revolution," the social democratic governments of Betancourt and Leoni actually served the purpose of diverting the people from a true revolutionary position to a position of eventual capitulation to American interests. As the Cuban revolution gradually gravitated toward Communism, the campaign of the PCV against Betancourt increased in tempo and in bitterness and became more clearly pro-Castro. On the other hand, the fascination that Cuba exerted over widespread youth sectors was perhaps the most

⁹¹ Popino, International Communism in Latin America, pp. 7-8. The PCV polled over 160,000 votes, better than 6% of the total, to place two of its members in the Senate and seven in the National Congress.

⁹² See, for example, commentaries attributed to Venezuelan Communists in Timothy F. Harding and Saul Landau's "Terrorism, Guerrilla Warfare and the Democratic Left in Venezuela," Studies on the Left, IV (Fall, 1964), 121-128.

important factor in the rebellion of March, 1960, when the pro-Communist minority within AD split and formed the MIR.⁹³

The Marxist plans of Domingo Alberto Rangel and his followers ceased to be made, as previously, within the framework of AD's internal discipline, and acquired more and more a character of an open defiance to the authority of AD's National Executive Committee. Encouraged by the Cuban example and the pronouncements of the PCV, the partisans of Rangel forgot that the Venezuelan situation demanded a cautious and gradual approach on the part of those --like Betancourt--who wanted to transform the country without bloodshed and without use of violent and totalitarian means.

When it became clear to Rangel that the majority of AD was behind the Betancourt approach, he became even more vehement in his accusations. In April of 1960 the MIR group, after having been expelled from AD, became a full-fledged political party.⁹⁴ Initially, Rangel and his followers tried to maintain a political line independent of

⁹³Documentos Incautados al Partido Comunista y al Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria," Documentos (July-September, 1965), pp. 400-404.

⁹⁴"Estatutos del Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria," Documentos (May-August, 1960), pp. 441-452; "Cronologia Nacional," in ibid., pp. 565-571; Ramón E. Ruiz, "Cuba's Shadow over the Americas," Massachusetts Review, IV (Spring, 1963), 455-475.

that of the Partido Comunista, with whom they had certain doctrinal differences, but these differences were obliterated and the two movements of the extreme Left became almost identical in every respect. The MIR lost its doctrinal independence and made itself an echo to all Communist pronunciamientos. The contradictory and yet sincere Rangel still managed to pursue an independent line from time to time, but his MIR had become submerged within the larger Communist front.

This larger Communist front, for its part, continued to suffer from divisionism. Since the mid-1950's the Communists have been forced to adapt their tactics and their strategy to conflicting influences from international Communist sources and to changing conditions in Venezuela. They have officially espoused the doctrine of "peaceful roads to socialism," whereby a "democratic front of national liberation" might come to power by parliamentary means. At the same time noncommunist Leftists have been increasingly prone to cooperate with some Communists in using violence to achieve political ends, as in Venezuela, while Chinese Communists, later joined by the Cubans, have advocated guerrilla warfare as the appropriate device for placing Communists in or near the seats of power.⁹⁵

In October and November of 1960, the first openly insurrectional acts on the part of the PCV and the MIR took

⁹⁵Carlos López, "The Communist Party of Venezuela and the Present Situation," World Marxist Review, VII (October, 1964), 20-27.

place, at the same time that the verbal attacks of the Cuban government against the Venezuelan regime multiplied. The political tension was further aggravated in 1961, as the identification between Castroism and the Soviet Bloc became more open. Above all, it was the external factor--the Cuban policy of Betancourt--more than internal considerations, that led the Venezuelan extremists to an actual fight against the government. Such a fight took on crucial importance when relations between Cuba and Venezuela were broken at the end of 1961. At this time there had already been constituted in Venezuela a terrorist organization known as the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN).⁹⁶ In the course of 1962, bloody riots took place in Carúpano and in Puerto Cabello, in which the collaboration between the forces of the extreme Right and of the extreme Left in the core of the same insurrectional apparatus became clear.⁹⁷ The hatred against the social democracy personified by AD and the government of coalition had led the Venezuelan extreme Left to collaborate with the traditional defenders of the status quo.

By 1963, the international links of the FALN had

⁹⁶The FALN was formed to coordinate guerrilla activity initiated by student revolutionaries. Its militants included youths from the MIR, the PCV, and even from moderate opposition parties such as URD.

⁹⁷These serious military revolts were partly a result of personal resentments and power struggles within the military, but some young officers supported them in the unrealistic hope that a "Nasserist" coup could speed up reforms in Venezuela.

become undisputed. For the most part, its leadership was made up of Communists and pro-Communists responsive to broad guidance from international Communist leaders and to direct orders from Cuba. This situation was revealed clearly in February of 1963, when a wave of terror and sabotage was unleashed in Venezuela in response to commands issued in Havana.⁹⁸ While the old Communist leadership still publicly at least called for the pursuance of the peaceful road, the revolutionary activities of the younger Communists led the government to outlaw all Communist factions late in 1962.⁹⁹

The illegalization decree against the parties of the extreme Left (MIR, PCV) was issued as a reaction to their armed insurrection and prohibited them from participating in the 1963 elections. The government and the coalition parties declared the possibility of an eventual return of the MIR and the PCV to legal existence so long as they renounced the use of violence. The parties of the extreme Left, for their part, have insisted that they should be allowed to carry on all their activities as well as that they be given equality with the governmental parties.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Popino, International Communism in Latin America, pp. 187-188.

⁹⁹ For a justification of Betancourt's actions, see the AD-sponsored publications, Braulio Jatar Dotti, Inhabilitación de la Extrema Izquierda y Guerrillas Corianas (Caracas: Colección "Pueblo y Parlamento," 1963), and Jesús Angel Paz Galarraga, Violencia y Suspensión de Garantías (Caracas: Colección "Pueblo y Parlamento," 1963).

¹⁰⁰ See "La Posición de Acción Democrática ante el

At the start of the electoral campaign of 1963, the extreme Left parties sustained conversations with the partisans of Larrazábal, as well as with the representatives of URD, concerning the possibility that one or the other would accept them in their electoral plans and would later accord them a position in the government, in case of their victory. But Larrazábal and URD rejected this compromising and risky support that could lead to embarrassing obligations later on. Thus, at election time, a conflict developed between the extremists and URD; and the pro-Communist and Communist currents found themselves more isolated than ever. Not only had they lost their former status as a respectable political force, but now they also lacked any great influence in the mass movements--labor and peasant leagues--which were led, in their overwhelming majority, by AD men.

The terrorism led by the FALN continued with increasing tempo for the purpose of discrediting the Betancourt administration and preventing a valid election in December of 1963. The terrorists appeared to hope that the military would take over by a coup d'état and that in the ensuing chaos they could seize power.¹⁰¹ The Venezuelan electorate dealt the insurgents a major psychological blow when they flocked to the polls in disregard of Communist demands for electoral

Problema," Documentos (January-March, 1963), p. 646, and "Texto de un Documento Incautado al Partido Comunista de Venezuela," in the same issue of Documentos, pp. 647-667.

¹⁰¹ Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 87-117.

abstention and threats of physical violence to participants.

Failing in their efforts to prevent the elections, the extreme Left has been less sure of its own power and some attempts at finding new avenues to power other than violence have been considered.¹⁰² During 1964-1965 the PCV emphasized "prolonged struggle" by guerilla forces in the countryside, and in 1966 it openly began to reduce emphasis on insurgency in favor of "democratic peace," the formation of a broad leftist front, and eventual recovery of legal status.

The Communist movement is now deeply split between the present party hierarchy and the Communist dissidents who are determined to press forward with armed insurgency in defiance of the official party line. Membership in the movement--which was never large or proletarian based--has also declined considerably. The dissidents are led by expelled Politburo member Douglas Bravo and supported by Castro. A stepped-up dissident-Communist campaign of terrorism in late 1966 featured a pattern of deliberate attacks against military personnel. It precipitated government intervention in the national universities in December, ending the inviolability of university premises in matters of public order and particularly the use of the Central University in Caracas as a terrorist safehaven.¹⁰³

¹⁰²FALN, "Our Errors," Studies on the Left, IV (Fall, 1964), 129-131; Ieda S. Wiarda, "The Passing of the Extreme Left?" Caribbean Monthly Bulletin, III (August, 1966), 5-6.

¹⁰³Department of State, World Strength of the Communist Party Organizations, p. 188.

PCV recruitment is concentrated in the metropolis and other urban areas, and among university and secondary school students. In the national universities, where political agitation and participation are as much part of life as education, Communist indoctrination is carried out by an aggressive Communist minority of both faculty and students. In this climate, student elections are violently competitive affairs and assume a significance of national proportions. Only recently have COPEI students been able to counter some of the Communist victories in these elections. Acción Democrática has remained in the minority since its split with the MIR faction in the early 1960's.¹⁰⁴

Intellectuals, artists and journalists are also well represented among PCV members and sympathizers. Terrorism, however, has cost the PCV some of its strongholds. Thus, the Communists lost control over the Radio and Television Union which had been in their hands or those of extreme Leftists since 1943, and in 1962 the Communist head of the Venezuelan Newspapermen's Association was voted out of office. The guerrillas have not been able to build up any support among the farmers, most of whom strongly back the government. The labor unions have never wavered in their support of Presidents Betancourt and Leoni and continue to

¹⁰⁴ Sanchez, The Development of Education in Venezuela, pp. 107-110; Rieck Bennet Hannifin, "Infiltración Comunista en los Centros Educativos de América Latina," Este & Oeste [Caracas], IV (November 15-30, 1965), 1-11.

be largely Acción Democrática-oriented.¹⁰⁵

There is little doubt that the Communists in Venezuela are presently deeply divided, that the guerrilla movement has caused more antagonism than support for the Communist cause, and that Communists have failed to make any large inroads among the workers and the peasants. On the other hand, the threat posed by their subversive activities to the government certainly cannot be ignored. The many causes for discontent, particularly unemployment and a slow-moving agrarian reform, are fertile subjects for Communist propaganda. There is always the possibility that the campaign of insurgency will stampede the military into a coup against the constitutional government which would enable the Communists to transform their insurgency into a popular cause supported by non-Communists.

Last but not least in this rich country, are the large United States private investments and the presence of American management and technical personnel evident to all and constant targets of the Communists and even many non-Communists, in whose lexicon anti-Yankeeism is synonymous with nationalism. American tolerance toward Pérez Jiménez (he and his secret police chief were even accorded some of the highest decorations from the U.S. government) resulted in an extreme reaction against any American officials immediately following the overthrow of the dictator.¹⁰⁶ During

¹⁰⁵ See chap. VI.

¹⁰⁶ Vice-President Nixon's visit to Venezuela in 1958

the Betancourt and Leoni administrations the Communists have exploited every instance in which the U.S. government has recognized and supported military Juntas throughout Latin America. The Communists in these instances have an easy task in posing as the "true democrats" while those friendly towards the U.S., like the AD leadership, are painted as being lenient towards all authoritarian regimes of the Right.

In summary, though beset by internal divisions and still suffering from their failure to prevent the 1963 elections or to wage a successful guerrilla campaign, the Communists could exploit a number of internal and external problems of the country in order to enhance their own party in Venezuela.¹⁰⁷ After nearly a decade of AD-dominated administrations, however, the Communists remained unable to gain a crucial stronghold in the largest sectors of the Venezuelan population--the campesinos and the workers--which were still the almost unchallenged preserve of Acción Democrática.

The failure of the Communists as well as of the

was the focus of such a widespread manifestation of anti-Americanism that it almost ended in tragedy. See Richard M. Nixon, Six Crises (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1962), pp. 209-234.

¹⁰⁷ The Cuban issue is reviewed in chap. IX; Georges Albertini, "La Subversión Extremista en Venezuela y su Realidad Actual," Este & Oeste [Caracas], IV (April 1-15, 1966), 1-9.

extreme Right parties to exercise any more influence than they have in recent years reflects the fact that Acción Democrática has successfully captured the broad middle-of-the-road in the Venezuelan political system. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Venezuelan political party spectrum as a whole lies more to the left than is true of the North American, Western European, or Old British Empire countries. That is to say, on a spectrum from Left to Right, the middle of the Venezuelan political party spectrum--and of public opinion generally--is considerably farther Left than would be the case in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, West Germany, and so on. Thus AD, which we have labelled democratic Left and which in the U.S. context would probably be considered socialist, in reality has been able to occupy the center of the Venezuelan party spectrum. Occupying the center and with immensely skillful leadership, AD has been able to expand its basis of support and achieve--for the first time in Venezuelan history--a measure of national consensus. In this way, AD has further helped integrate the diverse groups and viewpoints in the national political system around the center and thus helped prevent the polarization of political forces around two extremes which in the past had often led to constant upheavals, alternating periods of chaos and dictatorships, and societal breakdowns.

A broad middle ground is emerging in the Venezuelan system, and AD has benefited from the fact that it occupies

and dominates this center position. In the 1963 elections, for example, the AD presidential candidate received over 32% of the votes. These votes, if combined with those cast for parties with which AD has worked in governmental coalitions (COPEI, URD, FND), amount to nearly 88% of the total, with the small balance going to a number of what could be considered more extreme Right and Left parties.

Thus, by capturing the middle and by working with other moderate, middle-of-the-road but reformist parties representing the vast majority of the Venezuelan electorate, AD may be viewed as a factor for national integration and for the inclusion of a wider number of people and forces into the mainstream of Venezuelan politics.

To better understand how AD has served as an integrating factor and how it has secured the loyalty of diverse groups, we subsequently review how the organizational apparatus of Acción Democrática is structured in order to attract the largest number of Venezuelans and how the AD-dominated administrations of Betancourt and Leoni have sought to fulfill the needs and demands of a broader spectrum of Venezuelans.

CHAPTER V

THE PARTY ORGANIZATION

Acción Democrática pronouncements consistently stress that AD is a "democratic, multiclass, popular, and revolutionary party."¹ The Party has consistently worked to incorporate these characteristics in its organizational structure. From its inception, AD has made detailed provisions for the democratic selection of its leaders by the membership. It has likewise opened the Party to all Venezuelans regardless of class. Further, once a Venezuelan has shown interest in belonging to the Party, he becomes the center of attention of the local Party leadership. He participates in a series of meetings in which he becomes acquainted not only with the Party theory but also how this theory has been translated into programs to solve particular Venezuelan problems. The Party structure is depicted to him as one which dates back several decades and which has evolved and been modified in order to better serve its functions as a channel between the people and the government.²

¹Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, p. 57.

²Acción Democrática, La Cartilla del Militante (Secretaría Nacional de Propaganda, 1961).

When Acción Democrática emerged as the Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN), it was forced to operate underground. The restrictions imposed by the government of López Contreras and the clandestine nature of the Party made it imperative that the Party begin its existence in the form of very small political cells. These cells were made up of five members who gathered together to discuss Venezuelan problems and to seek ways in which the incipient Party could bring about their solution. Frequently these cell meetings took place in an old car of one of the participants, a stratagem that proved very useful in eluding police vigilance.³

Political cells rapidly spread throughout Caracas; students and workers were largely responsible for their formation and organization in the state capitals. The National Executive Committee (Comité Ejecutivo Nacional, CEN) which served as the directive organ in Caracas soon was aided by Regional Executive Committees (Comités Ejecutivos Regionales, CER) which served similar functions at the regional level. Both the CEN and the CER, at their respective levels, oversaw the work of the individual cells, where the doctrine and the character of the Party emerged as the product of regular discussion and study meetings.

In defiance of the governmental persecution and the banning of political activities, national conventions took

³Rodríguez, Bayonetas sobre Venezuela, pp. 15-20; Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 90-97.

place in secrecy. These conventions provided a forum for further discussion of the party organization and ideology. This exchange of views proved a great asset to the democratization of the PDN proceedings. Thus, in spite of its cell organization and the vertical structure imposed by the demands of clandestine existence, the PDN maintained its democratic nature by providing constant consultation within the political cells through the weekly meetings and between these cells and the directive organs through the national conventions.

The CEN and the CER functioned through separate and specialized secretariats--a general secretariat, a secretariat for organizational matters, a secretariat for press and propaganda, and other secretariats for financial and labor matters. A disciplinary tribunal was in charge of maintaining the Party discipline and of weeding out those members who might endanger or weaken the Party structure. A political bureau had the power of decision in regard to the political life of the Party in the interim period between conventions. The CER secretariats were often less numerous and often combined two or three functions in one body.

With the legalization of the Party in September of 1941 under the name of Acción Democrática, the restraints imposed by clandestine life were ended. AD grew rapidly around the small PDN cells and used as its rallying cry the slogan, "Not a single district, not a single municipio

(township) without its party headquarters."⁴ A wider and a more deliberative system thus became possible. The CEN secretariats were enlarged--Press and Propaganda were split in two; Youth and Women Secretariats were added; and the Labor Secretariat was now placed in charge of agrarian matters as well as of labor of affairs. National presidencies and vice-presidencies of the Party were instituted. The CERs were now called the Sectional Executive Committee (Comités Ejecutivos Seccionales, CES, usually corresponding to a state-wide organization). The Disciplinary Tribunal added more members, and the cells were replaced by Juntas (which could encompass neighborhood--barrio--groups or those of a whole community--locales). A system of assemblies was introduced at the various levels--local, state, and national--and in which matters affecting each level of the Party were discussed.

This expanded organizational system permitted the establishment of Party headquarters in practically all state capitals and in the majority of the cities and towns. Party members aided their leaders in recruiting new members in their particular professions and places of work. These efforts led to the formation of Party branches or fracciones in various professions. The organization of the workers into unions sympathetic to AD, for example, was eminently successful and this event spelled the decline of Communist

⁴Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 135.

influence among the emerging Venezuelan proletariat.⁵ The organization of campesinos into leagues, however, in the early 1940's was not nearly as intensive or as successful.⁶

The 1945 coup that toppled General Medina Angarita and placed Rómulo Betancourt, AD's líder supremo, at the head of the governing Junta, gave the Party an unprecedented opportunity to put in practice some of its programs at the same time that it tremendously increased the demands made upon the Party organization. These demands were particularly acute in three main areas. First of all, the Party had to handle the enormous growth in its ranks; an estimate put the Party membership in 1945 at no more than 20,000 and the control of only three seats in President Medina's Congress.⁷ The following year, in elections for a constituent assembly to write Venezuela's most liberal constitution, AD polled a million votes out of 1,300,000. At the end of the AD trienio in 1948, the Party was said to have at least 700,000 members, and this appears to be a conservative estimate.⁸ This phenomenal growth stemmed not only from the new

⁵Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America, pp. 142-152.

⁶Powell, Preliminary Report on the Federación Campesina de Venezuela: Its Origins, Organization, Leadership and Role in the Agrarian Reform Program, pp. 1-3. The labor and peasant sectors are considered in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

⁷Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, p. 254.

⁸Ibid., pp. 257-258; Morón, A History of Venezuela, p. 218.

democratic climate that had been ushered in by the Betancourt Junta (a rash of political parties had emerged and all claimed substantial memberships),⁹ but also from various elements who wanted to join the Party if for no other reason than to share in the spoils of office. These opportunist elements were well aware of the advantages which had traditionally accrued to those identified with the governmental party.

Whatever the motive, the new members, while greatly increasing the potential electoral power of AD, at the same time strained the Party facilities and overtaxed the Party leadership. This problem was especially evident in those states where the Party had been small and weakly organized prior to 1945. On the positive side, the new members made possible a great increase in the number of fracciones among various professionals and technicians. In this they were helped by the national organizational secretariat.

A second major problem stemmed from the fact that many Party leaders were now burdened with the responsibilities of governing the country. These Party veterans--Betancourt, Leoni, and others--were now filling the most important governmental posts. Their attention was naturally centered on fulfilling their governmental tasks rather than on Party matters. This meant that the top Party leadership at the national and at the state level had to be filled by a secondary

⁹Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 32-34.

and less experienced group of leaders.

Thirdly, the assumption of power by Acción Democrática in 1945 had come about through a series of circumstances and accidents rather than a step-by-step campaign culminating in the capture of the national executive. Many problems that now faced the adecos in their governing tasks had indeed been discussed in the Party meetings and had also been analyzed in the Party programs. But it was one thing to discuss and to analyze solutions to national problems and quite another to put them into practice. Further, while the Party program had indeed concerned itself with the major problems of Venezuela, it had not--and perhaps it could not have--envisaged their solution in detail, much less the detailed implementation of remedial legislation. Thus, between 1945 and 1948, the adeco leaders in government, though guided by the broad lines of Party doctrine, had to make their own decisions and improvise in method, in timing, and even in substance of governmental programs.

In order to lessen some of these problems, study groups and special committees were rapidly formed within AD. Technical and parliamentary commissions appeared and were given the task of assembling data and of helping the adeco government. Orientation sessions were held with adeco congressmen and members of local and state councils. The goal of all these activities was to reinterpret the Party doctrine in the light of the daily problems facing the men now entrusted with the country's government. The problems

and discrepancies that might arise between the Party and the government were handled by a newly created Secretariat of Relations.

A basic organizational problem--the overtaxing of the Party leadership by the tremendously increased membership--defied solution, however. Between 1941 and 1945 the preparation of the leadership cadres had been undertaken with a great deal of care. There was a great deal of sentiment in the Party that the leaders, freely elected by the membership, should be educated and trained so that they might prove themselves worthy of the trust of those who had selected them. The 1945-1948 trienio, however, made this gradual and painstaking training and educational period an impossibility. The large influx of new members demanded the hurried selection and preparation of Party leaders. Political indoctrination could no longer be conducted in small groups and even the larger groups of members were assisted by hastily prepared leaders. There was less chance to hear the members' opinions, or to debate the Party doctrine, or to explain the government's decisions. The growing gap between the vast membership and the overtaxed leadership in the government and in the Party were contributing factors in the overthrow in 1948 of adeco President Rómulo Gallegos after only a few months in office.¹⁰

¹⁰ Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 451-475.

The 1948 coup and the banning of Acción Democrática meant a return to many of the organizational tactics of the PDN period.¹¹ The free debate of issues with a view of transmitting members' opinions to the national leadership could no longer be permitted. Instead, once Party programs had been adopted at the national level, they were transmitted to the local Party units for discussion and suggestions. Party decisions, however, remained in force until the national leadership decided otherwise. In order to maintain a measure of freedom within the Party, local Party leaders were consulted as often as possible before the national leadership arrived at a decision.

The CEN assumed the supreme command of the Party, while the CDN was suppressed and the Conventions were suspended. The Political Bureau of the CEN was strengthened and in its hands now rested the fundamental political decisions of the Party. A special Secretariat of Internal Security was created in order to protect the Party against infiltration by government agents and to watch over the membership. The Secretariat of Relations took over control of the fracciones. A functioning system of communication between the various underground Party units was established and worked reasonably well throughout the country.

¹¹One of the first decrees of the military Junta "outlawed the Party, dissolved it, closed its meeting places, and suspended the distribution of its publications." The full decree text appears in Documentos Oficiales Relativos al Movimiento Militar del 24 de Noviembre de 1948 (Caracas: Oficina Nacional de Informaciones y Publicaciones, 1949), pp. 1-15.

During the 1948-1958 period there was a return to the grupos de base, the political cells, as the fundamental unit of the Party. This unit, in turn, was reduced to a skeleton organization of devoted activists. Due to the imperatives of clandestine life and Party security, the grupos de base and the fracciones became practically the same in the labor, the peasant, the professional, and the student sectors. Special grupos de base were established among the imprisoned adecos.

President Gallegos was exiled to Cuba. Betancourt escaped the army's dragnet and fled to Mexico. Leoni, at first imprisoned, later was allowed to leave for the United States.¹² Betancourt and Leoni, aided by a large number of exiles in various countries, worked to maintain contact among AD members and for their eventual return to Venezuela. Among the exiles, discussion groups were formed under the leadership of a Comité Coordinador Exterior (CCE). Special regulations were in force in the CCE grupos. The activities of the exiles and the support the AD underground received from other democratically-inclined organizations in the Hemisphere underscored the ideological bond that united Acción Democrática to many other political parties. There was an increasing demand that this ideological bond be made more formal and that an entente of popular democratic forces be created.¹³

¹² Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela, p. 26; Dr. Raúl Leoni (Caracas: Bohemia Libre Internacional, 1964), p. 7.

¹³ Kantor, "La Colaboración entre los Partidos," pp. 67-76.

At home, however, the close working relations between a few adecos and members of other political parties in the resistance to the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship came about with a heavy price.¹⁴ Some of the younger and newer members of AD had had little chance to become thoroughly familiar with the democratic and multiclass nature of their Party's ideology and structure. The strains of clandestine life made these adecos easy prey to the ideas that only violent, revolutionary change could possibly help the situation of the Venezuelan people and that only certain groups (i.e., the proletariat) were capable of leading this revolutionary change. Further, many of the more experienced adecos were exiled or in prison and thus could not maintain close contact with large sectors of the Party. Two secretaries-general of the underground AD, Leonardo Ruiz Pineda and Antonio Pinto Salinas were killed by the secret police. A third top AD official, Alberto Carnevali, died in a prison hospital for lack of adequate medical care. The list of AD veterans who suffered a similar fate became ever longer.¹⁵ The ultimate result was a growing alienation between certain sectors of the Party--especially its student and youth sectors--and the veterans, the "vieja guardia" of AD. This

¹⁴It should be noted that the AD leadership at home and abroad maintained its opposition to a formation of a "united front" with the Communists. See, for example, Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 849.

¹⁵Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, p. 48.

"generational conflict" caused organizational difficulties during the decade of dictatorship and was to threaten the very core of the Party in subsequent years. Such a conflict was a key factor in Domingo Alberto Rangel's split from the AD and the formation of the leftist MIR.¹⁶

With the overthrow of the dictatorship in 1958, the Party again was allowed legality and it soon assumed its activities in the open. It was necessary, however, to retain some of the organizational modifications that had been instituted during the dictatorship and the underground struggle. The exile leaders were reincorporated in the Party as were those freed from the prisons. The Women's Secretariat, which had disappeared between 1948 and 1958, resumed its functions. A general secretariat was created and included leaders who were called upon to cooperate with the Party leadership at the national level. Various commissions were formed under the national secretariats. This provisional organization, approved by an assembly of leaders in May, 1958, was in force until the meeting of the Ninth National Convention of Acción Democrática and until the Convention decided upon a more definitive form of organization.¹⁷

The present organization of Acción Democrática is a slightly modified version of the system approved in 1958.¹⁸

¹⁶Boesner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," pp. 86-91.

¹⁷Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 5-51.

¹⁸Acción Democrática, Estatutos (Caracas: Departamento

The "sovereignty" of the Party is said to reside in the Party's membership, grouped in its basic organizations and exercised through its assemblies and conventions. The "supreme authority" of the Party is the National Convention and as such it is the only organ that can modify the Party doctrine (teses), programs, statutes, and principles.

Membership

In order to be an AD member, one must be a Venezuelan, 18 years of age or older, enjoy a good reputation, and identify with the doctrinal and programmatic principles of the Party. The applicant must not belong to another political party and he may be accepted as a member after fulfilling the membership requirements. He must, among other requirements, fill out a membership application that is then signed by himself and by two members of the Party.¹⁹ Final action on the application is the responsibility of the appropriate CES, though the CES can and usually delegates this task to a lower executive level. Any rejections, which occur infrequently, must be explained to the applicant in writing. Those accepted are given a credencial, a temporary document that identifies them as Party members. Within a year this credencial is exchanged

Nacional de Prensa y Propaganda, 1965). This is the principal basis for the following survey.

¹⁹Acción Democrática, Solicitud de Inscripción (Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Organización, n.d.).

for a permanent carnet or card issued by the CEN.²⁰

Once accepted as a member, the new adeco is expected to actively participate in his grupo de base and also in whatever branches or fracciones that might apply in his case. He is expected to regularly attend Party functions, to learn the Party doctrine, and to respect the Party discipline. He has the right to criticize Party resolutions within the Party structure; criticisms made outside the Party may be considered grave offenses against the Party and be punished accordingly. While the Party resolutions are in force the member is expected to respect them until they are repealed or modified. He has the right to be elected to or to elect any Party member to any Party post.

The member is expected to pay dues on a monthly basis. No set amount is fixed, but ideally his contribution is based on his income. Dues need not be paid while the member is unemployed, but in other cases, a special plea for nonpayment must be made before the Party authorities. Besides these dues, the Party finances depend on contributions from Party members who hold administrative jobs or elective posts; special contributions from Party sympathizers; social activities such as dances, entertainment, etc., that are held by or at Party headquarters throughout the country; and, indirectly, government contributions.²¹

²⁰Acción Democrática, Solicitud de Carnet (Caracas: Secretaría Nacional de Organización, n.d.).

²¹Direct subsidies are not usually mentioned by either government officials or Party leaders but the government places a number of its advertisements and communiqués

All Party moneys are administered, depending on each case, by the president of the Party, by the general state secretaries, by the secretaries of organization or district secretaries, through the respective Finance Departments.

The Party member is encouraged to be a Party propagandist and recruiter at all times and it is through his individual efforts that fracciones are often formed. He is likewise urged to discuss freely all matters in the Party meetings. But while "internal democracy" is a recurrent theme in the partisan literature specially designed for the new member,²² there is an equal stress that Party discipline is indispensable if internal democracy is to prevail and if the Party is not to be vitiated by factional disputes and personalism.

Although the Party literature and files do not provide detailed information on the social, educational, or economic background of its members, an idea of the geographical distribution of the Party membership can be obtained from Party censuses, such as that of 1962 shown in Table 7.

Internal Organization

The internal organization of Acción Democrática

in the Party periodicals; a number of these periodicals are prominently displayed for sale at government buildings; and the national printing presses are often used to publish Party literature.

²²See Acción Democrática, La Cartilla del Militante.

TABLE 7

AD MEMBERSHIP, 1962 CENSUS^a

Sectional (State)	Membership
Anzoátegui	48,600
Apure	12,344
Aragua	24,004
Barinas	10,576
Bolívar	35,735
Carabobo	41,330
Cojedes	14,462
Cumaná	50,303
Carúpano	43,494
Libertador (Fed. Dist.)	24,999
Vargas (Fed. Dist.)	8,629
Falcón	54,220
Guárico	48,882
Lara	81,924
Mérida	29,320
Miranda	36,911
Monagas	56,471
Nueva Esparta	18,473
Portuguesa	35,267
Táchira	33,249
Trujillo	46,328
Yaracuy	21,979
Zulia	116,561
Amacuro (Terr.)	7,825
Amazonas (Terr.)	1,396
Total	903,282

^aSource: Comité Ejecutivo Nacional, "Acción Democrática," La República (July 25, 1962), p. 1; the same figures appeared in El Nacional (July 25, 1962), p.A-1. Note that conversations with non-adecos in 1964 indicated to the author that AD's official census might have understated the true strength of the Party.

has as its major organs at the national level the National Convention, the National Directive Committee (CDN), the National Political Committee (CPN), and the National Executive Committee (CEN). At the state level the Party

is subdivided into seccionales which correspond in general (though not always) to the political-territorial divisions of Venezuela; that is, to the various states. For geographical or other reasons, however, the CDN may combine or further subdivide the state unit. The supreme authority of the Party in each seccional is the Regional Convention, which is expected to keep all its decisions within the framework adopted by the National Convention. The directive organs of the seccionales are the Comité Directivo Seccional (CDS) and the Comité Ejecutivo Seccional (CES). Further, in each seccional there are found whatever executive, district, municipal, and local committees that may be determined by the Party statutes.

The membership of the Party is organized at the lowest level in grupos de base (basic groups) and in assemblies under the leadership of a local committee. The structure of the grupos, as well as their coordination, may be adjusted to the particular circumstances and demands of their location.

The National Convention

As the supreme authority of the Party, the National Convention is empowered to make decisions that are not subject to appeal. All other organs and Party members--at the national, state, and local levels--are bound by the Convention's decisions. Only a subsequent national convention can override or reverse a previous convention's resolution. Similarly, the basic Party program and the statutes can be

modified or adapted only by the National Convention.

The National Convention ordinarily meets every year on the date and place chosen by the CEN. It may also meet extraordinarily whenever convened by the CEN, by the National Political Committee, or by a special resolution of the National Convention itself.

Convention delegates usually number some 700. They are the members of the CDN, ordinarily 120; the 10 TDN (Tribunal Disciplinario Nacional, the supreme disciplinary organ of the Party) members (5 principales and 5 suplentes); about 60 delegates who are also the secretary-generals, the labor secretaries, and the agrarian secretaries of the CES (Comités Ejecutivos Seccionales). The members of the national secretariats or bureaus of youth, education, and professionals also attend, as do all AD parliamentarians as well as those adecos that exercise important national functions. The CEN may also invite other Party leaders besides those already mentioned, so long as their number is not superior to 10% of the regular Convention delegates. The bulk of the delegates, however, come from the 25 Sectional Conventions that precede each National Convention. The Sectional delegates are chosen by their respective conventions in the ratio of one for every 3,000 duly inscribed members and one more for each fraction of 1,500 or more. In those sections where the membership is inferior to 3,000, one delegate will be elected.

Voting during the National Convention is on an individual basis and state delegations are not compelled to

cast a bloc vote, though that usually occurs. Procedural rules are approved in a preparatory session before the official opening of the Convention. At this preliminary stage, a 12-man group is selected to conduct the actual Convention meeting.

Besides being in charge of the basic Party program and the Party statutes, the National Convention has in the past designated the candidate that the Party will present as the presidential candidate for Venezuela. Late in 1967 a system of primary elections for the selection of presidential candidates was set up, with the various state conventions indicating their preferences and these preferences being later put before the 1968 National Convention. At the time this primary system was adopted, the contention was that it would further help toward the democratization of the Party structure, with a greater chance for the individual members at the local levels to express their choice. In theory, the system would also make it more difficult for a single personality to dominate the National Convention and eventually to obtain the presidential nomination simply on the basis of charisma or personalism.²³

²³Since no National Convention or presidential elections have been held since the adoption of the primary system, it is impossible to gauge what lasting effects and what implications the system will have upon the Party structure or even upon the AD nominee for the presidency. It is already clear, however, that the new system has provoked some tensions within the Party; and some adecos have defected and formed their newly named Movimiento Electoral Popular. For commentaries on the new primary system, see "Venezuela, Las Elecciones del '68," *Ahora!* [Santo Domingo], VI (October 16, 1967), 9; "El Doctor Prieto Figueroa," *El Nacional* (December 17,

The National Convention's prerogative to determine the program of national governmental action that members of the Party will be expected to fulfill in their function as members of the government continued unchanged. It still decides what legislative actions the adeco parliamentarians will take. It nominates the members of the GEN, of the GPN, and of the TDN. It can approve or disapprove the actions of the Party organs, of the Party members, and of adecos serving as government officers at the various levels.

The National Directive Committee, CDN

The Comité Directivo Nacional, CDN, is the supreme authority of the Party in the interim period between meetings of the National Convention. In this interim, it is up to the CDN to fix or to modify the strategic lines of the Party; to designate the members of the Commission of Control and Vigilance; to fill the vacancies that may occur in the Comité Político and in the Tribunal Disciplinario Nacional; to oversee the implementation of the resolutions of the National Convention; to dismiss from their posts those members of the directive organs that have failed to fulfill their obligations; to hear appeals from the decisions of the Tribunal Disciplinario Nacional; and to exercise whatever other duties the Party statutes may assign to it.

1967), p. D-4; Cesar García Lovera, "Más Favorable la Perspectiva Política de la Oposición para 1968," El Nacional (December 24, 1967), p. D-5; Taylor, Jr., "Progress in Venezuela," pp. 270-274, 308.

Some 120 individuals form the membership of the CDN. Among them are the members of the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional of the Comité Político Nacional, the president of the TDN, the presidents of the labor and agrarian committees, the general secretaries and organization secretaries of the CES's, and one delegate each for each sectional, chosen by the respective sectional convention. Certain other individuals may also attend--the members of the national youth, education, and professional bureaus or secretariats, the national directors of departments, and ten members specially invited by the CEN.

Ordinarily the CDN meets twice a year, although it may meet extraordinarily at any time by resolution of the CPN or the CEN, or when such a meeting is requested by a majority of the sectionals. The CDN meetings provide an opportunity for the hearing of special reports and of the president's "state of the Party" message. The Secretary General reports on electoral matters. The president of the country, if an adeco, also sometimes attends and may present his own report on the state of the country and on the general political situation.²⁴

²⁴For example, President Betancourt addressed the XII National Convention of Acción Democrática on January 13, 1962. It is noteworthy that two national conventions were being held at the same time--that of the "official" Acción Democrática (led by Leoni, Paz Galarrraga, and other AD veterans) and that of the so-called ARS faction (led by former AD member Raúl Giménez). The fact that President Betancourt chose to address the former convention rather than the latter was further proof that he--both as president of the country and as indisputable supreme leader of AD--had chosen to throw his support to the party faction controlled by Leoni. See supra, chap. IV; Documentos (January-March, 1962), pp. 513-514.

National Political Committee

The Comité Político Nacional, CPN, is composed of members of the CEN, of the former Party presidents and former Party general secretaries, of 15 political secretaries chosen by the National Convention, and of the General Secretary of the CES that functions in Caracas. It meets at least once a month--often on a weekly basis--and it represents the Party authority between the semiannual meetings of the CEN. This makes it, in practice, the most powerful decision-making Party organ.

The CPN is in charge of overseeing the implementation of the programmatic principles and the strategic and tactical lines decided upon at the National Convention or, subsequently, at the CEN meetings. It is empowered to formulate the Party's position in relation to national and international events. Within the norms established by the National Convention or the CEN, the Comité Político Nacional can make decisions about the Party's participation in coalitions or other forms of governmental or political organization. It is in charge of overseeing the internal unity of the Party and it can temporarily exclude those Party officials whose mistakes endanger the Party or who fail to fulfill their Party obligations. These Party officials are then submitted to the National Disciplinary Tribunal. Finally, the decisions of the CEN may be revised, modified, or revoked by the vote of two-thirds of the members of the CPN.

National Executive Committee

The Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN), the supreme executive organ of the Party, is made up of a president, two vice-presidents, and the members of the Secretariado Nacional (national secretariat), all exercising their functions for one year and assisted by a full-time office staff.

The CEN convokes the National Convention, the Comité Directivo Nacional, and the Comité Político Nacional of the Party. It implements and oversees the implementation of the Party resolutions by the various Party organs. It maintains constant communication with all the lower organs of the Party and regularly submits to them informative material and guidelines. In turn, it receives communications dealing with matters that primarily concern the grupos de base as well as the intermediary organs of the Party.

All activities of the CEN are regularly reported to the Convention and to the CDN. Among these CEN activities are the supervision of all organs of the Party, the nomination of the directors of the national departments and of the advisers for the Party's peripheral organs, and the temporary replacements for the CEN's own members who may have resigned or died. The CEN is further empowered to decide which matters it considers of such importance that they transcend the responsibilities of the CDN. These matters are then submitted for a referendum by the

seccionales. Finally, the CEN is the responsible organ for the maintenance and leadership of Party relations with the government and governmental officers.

The internal functioning of the CEN and the powers of each of its members are determined by the Party statutes. The Party president officially represents the Party and has the power to delegate such a representative role to one or more of the CEN members. He interprets and seeks the implementation of the general policy of the Party in conformity with the recommendations of the National Convention and the CDN. He orders the implementation of the decisions of the Comité Directivo Nacional, of the Comité Político Nacional, and of the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional. He signs the Party correspondence and documents. He authorizes the extraordinary pronouncements of the Party at the recommendation of the CEN. He supervises the activities of the CEN and oversees the maintenance of Party discipline. The Party president is aided by two vice-presidents who, in the order of their election, can replace him whenever necessary.

The Secretariado Nacional is an administrative rather than policy-making organ. It is essentially the bureaucratic core of the Party and it is composed of a secretary general, a subsecretary general, and a number of administrative secretaries. In order to oversee the continuous tasks of party organization and routine activities, the Secretariado meets every 15 days. Thus, while the other members of the CEN are essentially policy-makers, those

that belong to the Secretariado are essentially Party bureaucrats. An exception, however, appears to be the functions of the secretary general himself. Though his primary task is to oversee the Secretariado Nacional, in practice he may be in many ways second only to the Party president and he may, in fact, have as much or more prestige than the president himself. Occasionally this post has been the most powerful within the Party, as when it was held by Rómulo Betancourt.

The secretary general is responsible for the overall coordination of the CEN and for the operation and coordination of the Party branches or fracciones. At the same time he must work with the Party president in the maintenance of internal discipline. He periodically transmits to the CES's the political lines laid down by the CEN. Significantly, too, the secretary general is in charge of overseeing the Party relations with other political, economic and social organizations outside the Party structure.

The Secretary of Organization is also an important figure within the Secretariado Nacional. He is responsible for the registration and control of the Party membership throughout the country. He decides where new Party units should be formed and he coordinates the work of the CEN with the seccionales. He keeps in touch with the seccionales through circulars and special instruction letters as well as receives information from the seccionales to be

transmitted to the CEN.²⁵

Four secretariados have a functional character; they are the labor, agrarian, youth, and education sectors. The labor and agrarian committees or secretariados meet every 15 days and they may also convene as a united body that attempts to coordinate labor and agrarian policy. The combined meeting usually takes place once a month. The youth secretary and his aides concern themselves with matters of particular interests to the youth sector of the Party. The education secretary not only concerns himself with matters of political education, establishment of party libraries and social centers, issuance of pamphlets and books, but he also coordinates the work of the educators who are members of the Party.

Technically, these four secretaries are chosen by the National Convention. In practice, however, the National Convention simply ratifies the choices of each Party sector's conventions (plenos). Thus, the Party agrarian convention, the pleno agrario nacional, chooses the members that make up the agrarian secretariat, just as the labor sector chooses the members of the labor secretariat, and so on.

The Secretary of Relations is in charge of overseeing internal matters of the Party such as the coordination of various branches, the relations between national and local

²⁵Octavio Lepage, "La Secretaría Nacional de Organización," A.D. (July 5, 1958), p. 7.

units, etc. He is also in charge of developing and promoting the activities of the peripheral Party organizations, especially the professional fracciones. He is responsible for relations between the Party and the government at all levels and he serves as the main intermediary between these two institutions.

Four political secretaries participate on the labor, agrarian, and youth secretariados. They also advise and assist all Party organs in the fulfillment of their assigned functions which in practice means that they act as trouble-shooters and coordinators in whatever matters the Party president and secretary general so decide.

The Secretariado de Propaganda is in charge of disseminating the Party doctrine among members and non-members. It oversees the preparation of books and other material that deals with Party doctrine and programs. The Secretariado de Imprenta deals with the national press, arranges for press releases, etc. The Press Secretary is the editor of the weekly Party periodical A.D. and he informally works with the pro-AD newspaper La República²⁶ and the more scholarly monthly Política.

For the better functioning of the CEN, this body is further subdivided into a number of departments that are in charge of specific jobs in certain areas. These are the departments of professional organs, of social service, of

²⁶ Documentos (April-June, 1961), p. 718.

international affairs, of parliamentary and municipal affairs, of study and indoctrination, of press and propaganda, of finances, of public relations, of women's affairs, of community development, of economic and technical matters. Each of these departments is advised by a number of experts whose number and organization is determined by the Comité Político. Each department is headed by a director designated by the CEN and the CEN also decides when coordination and discussion meetings should take place among the various secretariados and the national and sectional department directors.

Sectional (State) Organizations

The sectional (usually meaning state) organizations are comparable to those found at the national level. Thus, in each sectional, the direction and control of the Party and the application of the program and tactical lines decided at the national level are entrusted to the sectional conventions, to the sectional directive committees, and to the sectional, district, and municipal executive committees.

The sectional conventions meet annually except when the CEN, the CDS, or the CES call for an extraordinary meeting. A majority of the district committees can also obtain an extraordinary convocation of the sectional convention. The convention delegates comprise two representatives of the CEN; the members of the sectional directive committee; the members of the agrarian, labor, youth, and education committees; members of the disciplinary tribunal

and of the commission of control and vigilance (in both cases, the principales, not the suplentes of each organization); the directors of sectional departments; and special guests invited by the CES with the right to vote in number no larger than 10% of the effective delegates. Beyond these and forming the bulk of the sectional convention participants are delegates chosen by the district committees. Each district committee has the right to a delegation of 4 members for each 1,000 inscribed members or fraction of more than 500 members. These delegates are elected by the respective district conventions.

The Sectional Convention elects a sectional executive committee, a sectional disciplinary tribunal, a delegate to the CDN and the delegates to the National Convention. It fixes the political line to be followed in relation to regional events--always within the framework established at the national level by the national convention and other superior organs of the Party. It discusses political, organizational, economic, and social problems that concern the particular sectional. It hears and criticizes reports of sectional leaders. It debates resolutions taken at the national level and holds referendums on those questions placed before it by the CEN.

The Sectional Directive Committee (CDS) meets twice a year and has similar powers to those of its national counterpart, the CDN. While it is not in session, the directive organ with sectional jurisdiction is the sectional

executive committee (CES). It is made up of a general secretary, a secretary of organization, and agrarian, labor, youth, education, and political secretaries as designated by the sectional conventions. The members of the CES have, in their respective sectionals, the same responsibilities and powers as those of the members of the CEN, but on a regional or state scope. Further, the CES has a similar system of departments and committees as envisaged for the CEN, but in number no larger than those of the CEN and varying according to the needs of the particular state.

Beyond this, the CES is in charge of maintaining permanent communication between the superior and inferior organs of the Party, of regularly submitting informative and doctrinal material to the membership, and of canvassing the grupos de base on issues of local, state, and national interest. It must regularly inform the CEN on the economic, political, and social problems of its region or state.

The supreme authority of the Party at the district level is the District Convention which regularly meets once a year. The District Convention comprises delegations from each municipal committee on the basis of four delegates for each 500 members or fraction superior to 250; two representatives of the CES; the CED; the two delegates of the District Committee to the Sectional Directive Committee, and the Directors of the District Departments. Its powers and duties are the same as those of the sectional conventions, but on a corresponding district level.

The continuing direction of the Party on a district scale corresponds to the District Executive Committee which is nominated by the respective district convention for a year. It has the same attributions as the CES on a district scale and it is made up of an organizational secretary, and labor, agrarian, youth, and education secretaries. District Departments may be established by the CED according to the CED's particular needs. On a municipal level, the directive organ is the Comité Ejecutivo Municipal (Municipal Executive Committee) with a membership chosen by the grupos de base of the particular municipal unit.

Balloting and Elections

The decisions of the various conventions, directive organs, and party assemblies are decided by an absolute majority of the votes of the members present. The primary elections of the Party are those in which the membership chooses the members of the municipal committees and the delegates that make up the district conventions. The primary elections are regulated by rules set up by the National Convention and which guarantee the right to vote to all members.

Balloting is done on an individual basis. An absolute majority is required unless three ballots have been taken and no candidate has such a majority. Then the candidate with the most votes wins.

The balloting for the election to directive posts and for posts of popular representation is secret, except

in those cases when two-thirds of the delegates of a particular convention decide to have a public vote. The choice of candidate to the presidency of Venezuela, however, is always done through secret balloting.

The temporary vacancies of the members of the various directive organs of the Party are filled by the same organs in which they occur. The vacancies occasioned by death are filled by the organs immediately superior until the respective convention proceeds to fill the vacancies.

In order to occupy a post of leadership in the Party, leadership experience is required--an experience that is acquired in the political organs of a lower level. Six years of membership are necessary to be elected to a national organ; four years to a sectional organ, three years to a district post, and one year to the directive organs of local and intermediary level, such as municipal. The same respective experience requirements apply when one considers candidates for delegates to the conventions and to posts of popular representation, except that in special cases, due to Party needs, these requirements may be waived by a two-thirds vote of the respective convention delegates.

Elective and Public Posts

No member of the Party may present himself as a candidate to an elective office (usually referred to in the Party literature as a "popular representation" post) nor accept a public post of political character or of administrative responsibility without the previous express

authorization of the respective directive Party organ. Without such authorization the Party member may be expelled. The choice of candidates for Congress, for legislative assemblies, and for municipal councils are regulated by the Party and implemented by the respective organs involved at the various levels of the Party. Further, the programs and platforms of these candidates must receive the previous approval of the particular convention. The National Political Committee may, at any moment, decide which AD members should resign their posts either temporarily or permanently and the CES has a comparable power in respect to state and municipal posts.

Party members who are candidates for posts of popular representation or who will occupy bureaucratic posts in which public moneys are administered, are required to make a sworn and notarized declaration of their possessions. A copy of this declaration is sent to the Party direction at the national level. Further, members of the Party who fill political or administrative posts are required to send to the national Party headquarters an undated resignation letter. The conventions and the executive committees may, on their own initiative or when solicited by other Party members, make the resignation effective whenever the member involved infringes programmatic or statutory dispositions.

Party Discipline and Control

The failure to carry out duties assigned by the Party and the disloyal or dishonest practices of public or private functions are considered to be contrary to Party

discipline and morality. The abandonment of leadership posts without justified reasons and irregularities committed in the exercise of public or elective posts are also considered indiscipline on the part of the member involved. The misappropriation of Party goods and property is considered both an act of dishonesty and of Party disloyalty.

In order to oversee the Party morals and discipline there are commissions of control and vigilance on a national, sectional, and district level. These commissions are made up of five principal members (principales) and five substitutes (suplentes) in the national level, and three principales and three suplentes in the sectional and district levels. These commissioners are designated by the national, sectional, and district directive committees, in their respective levels. Their task is to investigate Party members in order to see that statutory dispositions are fulfilled as well as that the lines laid down at the national level are carried out.

To judge cases of Party indiscipline or moral faults there are tribunals at the national, at the sectional, and at the district levels. The Tribunal Disciplinario Nacional (TDN) stands at the head of the Party judicial organs and it is the final arbiter, except in those cases which can be appealed to the National Convention. All Party members may be brought before the TDN on charges of disloyalty or violation of Party discipline. There are various degrees of sanctions, running all the way from

general admonition to final and definitive expulsion from the Party. The TDN is made up of five principales and five suplentes; the tribunals at the sectional and district levels have three of each. The members of the disciplinary tribunals are chosen by their respective conventions and exercise their functions for one year.

Relations Between the Party and the Government

The Party has established various coordinating commissions in order to provide for good working relations between the Party and the government as well as for harmony between Party and public functions. The National Coordinating Commission includes some members of the CEN and the various ministers and directors of government institutes who are also Party members. The Sectoral Coordinating Commission is made up of members of the Comité Político Nacional and the members of the various departments as well as high functionaries of ministries and institutes who are Party members. The Sectoral Coordinating Commission studies problems that are of particular relevance to the various Party sectors, etc. Sectional, District, and Municipal Coordinating Commissions have similar composition and function as their national counterparts.

The interrelations between the Party and the government are particularly striking at an informal level not spelled out in the Party statutes. As the Party with the largest number of deputies and senators (though not a majority) for the past decade, Acción Democrática leaders

often hold the highest and most important posts in Congress. Thus, for several years, the President of the Senate and of the entire National Congress was an old time adeco. In such a position, according to constitutional dispositions,²⁷ he could become the acting president of the whole country in case of the chief executive's death or until new elections could be held.

This same adeco leader often headed the AD parliamentarians' weekly sessions with the president of the country, served as editor of AD publications, and chaired countless study commissions for both Presidents Betancourt and Leoni. He travelled extensively throughout Venezuela both as an AD leader and as a government spokesman as well. In these travels he often met with state governors--all of them appointed by the president and many of whom were AD leaders in their own respective states. If he visited an agrarian reform project, he was likely to meet with the local president of a peasant league who, more often than not, doubled as president of the local AD unit. In turn, the president of the peasant league, who might also be the elected mayor of the municipality, is always the preferred channel between the National Agrarian Institute--a government entity--and the peasants and it is through him that the peasant demands become known (and fulfilled) by the government.

²⁷ Pan American Union, Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, 1961, Title VI, chap. I, art. 187.

These types of interrelations between the Party, the government, and the individual Venezuelan--as citizen and/or as adeco--can be illustrated ad infinitum. It thus becomes clear that AD is a well organized Party. Its organizational structure and its chains of command and of linkage exist not just on paper but in reality as well. The entire organization, in fact, actually functions, for the most part, according to the organizational plans laid out in the Party's statutes. More often than not the interrelations between the Party and the government reinforce rather than weaken the organizational structure of the Party and the bonds that unite Party leaders and Party members.²⁸

Some Implications of the Party Organization

The very elaborate Party organization spelled out in the Estatutos was in many ways a careful attempt to minimize personalismo, the imposition of a charismatic leader that overshadowed the Party membership and ideology. The element of personalismo had been behind the appearance--and the demise--of countless Venezuelan political parties. These parties seemed to have emerged around the figure of an influential caudillo at election time and had ceased to exist once the caudillo had obtained his major goal, political power.²⁹

²⁸ The links between the Party, the government, the Party membership and those outside the Party structure are further detailed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

²⁹ See *supra*, chap. III; Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, *passim*.

In AD's organizational apparatus there has been a conscious attempt to let any Venezuelan enter the Party ranks, become a full participant, and eventually have as good a chance as anyone else to ascend in the Party hierarchy or to be nominated for an elective post. It is true that the attempt to avoid personalismo and at the same time to make the Party a truly democratic organization has fallen short of the statutory ideal. What is remarkable, however, is that the attempt has been as successful as has been the case.³⁰ Many, for example, can easily find ways in which Betancourt imposed his personality upon the Party. What can be as easily proven, however, is the very remarkable fact--a rarity both in the Venezuelan and the Latin-American context--that Betancourt did not succeed in prevailing upon his Party to accept his choice of a presidential candidate in 1963.³¹

Whatever charges of personalismo have been made against the AD leadership, one must look at the situation in perspective and in the particular Venezuelan context. It would be easy, for example, to substantiate that both Betancourt and Leoni have left their indelible marks upon the Party apparatus. It is no mere coincidence that even

³⁰ Ronald K. Shelp, "Latin American Leadership in Transition: Legitimacy vs. Personalismo," SAIS Review, X (Winter, 1966), 27-34.

³¹ Boesner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," pp. 73-96. This is abundantly documented by practically all students of Venezuelan politics such as Alexander, Martz, Taylor, etc. See also the various issues of Documentos for 1962-1963.

now, four years since the close of the Betancourt administration, there are elements in Acción Democrática that are identifiable primarily as betancouristas rather than adecos. On the other hand, beyond Betancourt and Leoni there has existed a strong leadership cadre within Acción Democrática. Thus, the names of adecos who could obtain the Party nomination for the presidential elections in 1968 is by no means narrowed to one or even a couple of individuals (both Leoni and Betancourt are not constitutionally eligible for reelection in 1968). This contrasts sharply with the vast majority of Venezuelan political parties. Barring death or similarly catastrophic occurrences, it is already clear who will be the standard-bearers for COPEI, for FND, for URD--not to mention the standard-bearers for smaller parties and parties that are clearly more personalistic entities than "modern mass parties" as defined previously.

Finally, the Acción Democrática organization has not only avoided the most blatant aspects of personalismo but it has also been successful so far in capturing the loyalty of a large membership basis. The organizational structure itself has been an important factor in the development of AD as a modern, democratic, and integrating force in the society. Its victories in various elections bear this out as does the fact that other political parties have sought to achieve similar victory at the polls by copying the adeco organization. In the words of Martz, "an interesting sign of the Party's success in this area

[i.e., organization] has been the extent to which younger Venezuelan parties have copied it. Despite variations in detail, the skeletal forms of the other parties are consonant with the AD model."³²

For all these reasons, Acción Democrática is not like the various ephemeral, weak, and personalistic parties of the country's past; its strong programmatic orientation means that the Party will almost certainly remain a powerful force even after the personalities of Betancourt and of Leoni have passed from the scene. Further, because its organizational apparatus has served as a sort of "matrix" for the apparatuses of other Venezuelan political parties, the influence of Acción Democrática is likely to go beyond the existence of that Party itself. AD may thus see itself supplanted at the polls at a future date, but the type of political party apparatus it originated--an apparatus committed to the ideals of multiclass membership, of a chance for membership ascension in the Party hierarchy, of primacy of Party over personality, of intimate links and access between Party and government--is likely to continue to apply.

Just as the AD Party apparatus has served as the

³² Martz, *Acción Democrática*, p. 148. For comparisons with AD's own, see the organizational structures delineated in Partido Social-Cristiano Copei, *Estatutos* (Caracas: Partido Social-Cristiano de Venezuela, 1964), and Domínguez Chacín, *El Partido Político*, *passim*. The latter explains and presents the URD structure.

matrix for the structural organization of other political parties, its key policy areas of agrarian reform, of labor, of industrial diversification and welfare improvement, and of international relations have served as matrices for other Venezuelan political parties' programmatic stands. In such a context, it will be appropriate for us to look at AD's key policy areas not only as they have reflected that Party's ideology and as they have influenced the administrations of Presidents Betencourt and Leoni but also as they have affected groups and parties outside the Acción Democrática fold, thus bearing out AD's contention that it has been a factor for the integration of diverse forces within the rapidly modernizing Venezuelan society.

CHAPTER VI

ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA'S INTEGRATING AGRARIAN REFORM

The Agrarian Reform Program of Presidents

Betancourt and Leoni has been hailed as their most significant contribution to the economic and political democratization of Venezuela.¹ While major and minor difficulties have been encountered in the program's implementation,² there is little dispute that the program has aroused a great deal of hope among those most directly affected by it--the campesinos--and that it has provoked a great deal of interest in and out of Venezuela.

In this chapter our concern will be to examine the program's evolution as a response to the Venezuelan agrarian situation, the program's political background, and its relations to the Acción Democrática's governments of Betancourt and Leoni.

¹There are many who concur with this estimate. See, for example, Raymond J. Penn and Jorge Schuster, "La Reforma Agraria de Venezuela," Revista Interamericana de Ciencias Sociales, II (January, 1963), 29-39. The authors consider the agrarian reform law "destined to improve the welfare of the rural population as well as to be viewed by other countries as a model program." Quote on p. 29.

²For a review of some of these difficulties, see Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 173-193.

The Venezuelan Agrarian Reform Law that went into effect on March 5, 1960, was the culmination of many years of study and represented the synthesis of many attempts at a solution of the agrarian problem. The Law, promulgated by President Rómulo Betancourt, was hailed by him and by other Acción Democrática leaders as the fulfillment of the ideals of Bolívar, as an application of the programmatic bases of AD, and as a break with the practices existent for centuries in the Venezuelan agricultural system.³

The agrarian reform promulgated by President Betancourt had enormous historical and political significance. Historically, it represented a break with a past characterized by agrarian feudalism and it put forth a blueprint to transform the Venezuelan social structure. Here lay its political significance--by seeking to bring the campesino into the mainstream of a rapidly industrializing and modernizing Venezuela, the agrarian reform program aimed above all at the integration of the campesino into the political life of the nation. The peasant was promised land as well as participation in the political process and access to governmental decision-making. This signified that the Venezuelan rural social structure would no longer remain rigid as it had for centuries--a pyramid of power in which

³Instituto Agrario Nacional, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela: Una Revolución dentro de la Ley (Caracas: Editora Grafos, 1964); Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática; Doctrina y Programa, passim.

the terrateniente and his descendants ruled undisputed over the vast and silent mass of illiterate, landless, disfranchised campesinos. Given land, the means to make it productive, and the vote, the Venezuelan campesino in 1960 was at the threshold of becoming "the free man." envisaged by Bolívar in his more idealistic moments over a century and a half ago.⁴

The immense historical and political significance of the agrarian reform program put in relief the enormous problems of the campesino. He had existed in misery and squalor for centuries; his hopes had only too often cost his life--how many times had he not volunteered to fight for a caudillo who promised him land? It was now necessary, the AD leadership urged, not only to rekindle those hopes but, more importantly, to fulfill them and, at the same time, make the campesino aware that he himself was the only one who could ultimately bring them to full realization. For what was promised him in 1960 was not a modern version of the centuries-old slogan of tierra para los campesinos but it was an attempt to give the campesino a voice in the councils of government, a government that sought to be representative of all Venezuelans,⁵ terrateniente and oil

⁴Salcedo-Bastardo, Visión y Revisión de Bolívar, pp. 185-204; Juan Ernesto Rothe, "Bolívar, Precursor de la Reforma Agraria en América," Lotería [Panama], IX (October, 1964), 78-87.

⁵See, for example, one of many Betancourt's affirmations of this principle in "Plan de Gobierno del Presidente Betancourt," Documentos (May-August, 1960), pp. 379-440, especially p. 366.

men, campesinos and workers. It was this central idea, a determination to make the campesino an integral participant in the emerging and modernizing national system, that justified labeling the Venezuelan version of agrarian reform an integrating one.⁶ In this chapter we examine the extent of the agrarian problem in Venezuela, how it has been approached by the Acción Democrática governments of Presidents Betancourt and Leoni, and to what extent--if any--does it justify its label of being an integrating factor between the Party membership and leadership, with those outside the Party structure, and within the nation as a whole.

The Agrarian Question

The struggle for land has a long history in Venezuela,⁷ and at its roots lies the nature of the ownership

⁶ "Integrated Agrarian Reform," Letter from Venezuela, I (November, 1965), 9. This is a publication of the Oficina Central de Información, Caracas. See also Wilson J. Rojas, Razón y Objetivos para la Vigencia de la Reforma Agraria en Venezuela (Caracas: Instituto Agrario Nacional, 1962); "La Integración Vertical: Una Solución para Nuestros Problemas Agroindustriales," Tiempo Económico [Caracas], I (September 3, 1964), 4-6; Víctor Manuel Giménez Landínez, Objectives and Requirements of an Integral Agrarian Reform (Caracas: Tall. Gráf. del MAG, 1962), pp. 1-15; Víctor Manuel Giménez Landínez, La Reforma Agraria Integral (2 vols.; Caracas: Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, 1963). Giménez Landínez was President Betancourt's Minister of Agriculture.

⁷ The best source on the history of agrarian reform in Venezuela is Luis Troconis Guerrero's La Cuestión Agraria en la Historia Nacional (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1962). See also Miguel Parra León, El Problema Agrario en Venezuela (Caracas: Presidencia de la República, 1959); José María Franco García, "La Cuestión Agraria en Venezuela," ARBOR [Madrid], LVIII (June, 1964), 56-79; and Ramón Fernández y Fernández, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela (Caracas: Las Novedades, 1948).

of land. Land ownership derives from the legal institutions and usages of the conquest, the colonial period, and the Spanish empire, and the nature of human labor upon this land--which for centuries, in one form or another, has been that of debt peonage, serfdom, slavery, or near-slavery. Latifundism, the ownership of vast tracts of land, has been the traditional mode of rural property. Latifundia emerged from repartimientos (original land grants by the Spanish crown) and from encomiendas.⁸ Repartimientos and encomiendas were destined to vitiate the whole history of land ownership and of land improvement. They established the foundations of the economic and social structure of colonial society, a structure that was, with minor changes, perpetuated on into the Republican decades. In turn, a direct effect of the latifundist system has been the small farm, the minifundium, the Venezuelan conuco--a small plot of land of a few acres which the sharecropper holds at the pleasure of the landowner. This land is cultivated by the most primitive methods and usually suffices only to provide the minimum food needs of the family. Thus the campesino

⁸The encomienda, a word for which there is no adequate English equivalent, was the legal device under which the Crown entrusted specified numbers of Indians to deserving Spaniards, the encomenderos, who thereby won definite rights over their Indians and incurred equally specific obligations to them. The royal intention in establishing the encomienda was merciful, but in practice the encomienda became an euphemism for the enslavement of Indians. See Herring, A History of Latin America, pp. 190-191; Diffie, Latin American Civilization, pp. 57-103.

has by tradition been half farmer and half farm laborer. His work has been divided between that on the estate of the landowner and on his small, uneconomic patch of ground, which in almost all cases, has been granted to him under conditions that keep him and his family in virtual bondage to the landowner.⁹

Along with the problem of land, then, the problem of the peasant has also existed from the beginnings of Venezuela's history. In spite of Bolívar's devotion to an enlightened form of government--a modified form of democracy to suit the Venezuelan reality of the 1800's--and his desire for the abolition of slavery, it was not until 1854 that President Gregorio Monagas decreed emancipation. At that time, the total Venezuelan population was estimated at 1,756,000, of which 13,000 were slaves and 27,000 were freedmen.¹⁰ The abolition law that freed the slaves and aimed at incorporating them into the national life was in practice an inhumane and uneconomic measure, for it was not complemented by an indispensable agrarian reform.

⁹The literature on the latifundist system in Latin America and in Venezuela and on the various attempts at agrarian reform is vast. See, for example, Clarence Senior, Land Reform and Democracy (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1958), especially pp. 1-12, 89-181; T. Lynn Smith, Agrarian Reform in Latin America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1965); Ramón Losada Aldana, "Concepción y Características del Latifundio," Economía y Ciencias Sociales [Caracas], VI (January-June, 1964), 32-58; Salvador de la Plaza, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela: Objetivos y Evaluación (Caracas: Universidad Central, 1964), pp. 1-73.

¹⁰Instituto Agrario Nacional, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela, p. 25.

Thousands of slaves and freedmen, who devoted themselves almost exclusively to agriculture, were thus given their freedom without concomitantly being given a chance to use this freedom to become a productive and dynamic force. Without means, they soon became virtual serfs, often for their former masters--and frequently found themselves worse off than before. This situation of human misery coupled with exploitation in an inefficient latifundia system continued unabated through the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century. The governments changed frequently, but the condition of the peasant and of agriculture remained as backward as ever. The exploitation of the campesino was condoned by the various governments, and many times the so-called Liberals were at least as guilty in this respect as the Conservatives. Guzmán Blanco, the most prominent Liberal leader, was a gran terrateniente.¹¹

The unlimited use and abuse of the executive powers, fiscal solvency, and international security were the sturdy mainstays of the long dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935). But his regime of omnipotence and of exceptional duration was above all made possible because it had a solid base--agrarian feudalism, a feudalism which had existed in Venezuela since colonial times and which, despite the new emphasis on oil, had become more consolidated than ever during Gómez' government. The illicit use of the

¹¹Wise, Caudillo, passim.

nation's treasury, the ignoring of rights and guarantees, the employment of monopolies and other consequences of the regime, permitted the dictator and many of his lieutenants to create gigantic fortunes in rural estates. The dictator's estate alone was estimated conservatively at approximately \$65 million in 1936. Those associated with him also possessed large and valuable tracts of land throughout the country.¹² To this day one can travel for hours through richly planted farms formerly owned by Gómez and his friends.

Of equal importance and also largely responsible for the latifundia was the unchecked usurpation of tierras ejidales (public lands), some taken by Gómez, others by the various oil companies through friendly arrangements with state governors and the tolerance of the national government. The oil companies turned part of these lands over to the governors' personal use.

All these methods resulted in the still greater expansion of the latifundist system during Gómez' administration. The system had its origins in the colonial period but it had been perpetuated and become even more consolidated during Venezuela's independent history. The system of latifundia was thus expanded during the wars for independence and during the nineteenth century era of civil wars and successive dictators; but it became even more

¹²Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, pp. 17-36 and Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 349 substantiate the charge that Gómez and his familiar and political clan had taken over the best lands in Venezuela. See also Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, pp. 187-207.

firmly entrenched during the Gómez years. An agrarian census in 1937 revealed this situation:

TABLE 8

RURAL OWNERSHIP AND RURAL POPULATION, 1937^a

- (1) 4.4% of rural proprietors owned 2,705,888 hectares
96.6% of rural proprietors owned 731,795 hectares
- (2) 10.6% of the campesino population had its own land
89.4% of the campesino population worked on somebody else's land
- (3) the rural population (defined as that which lived in localities of less than 1,000 inhabitants or who lived scattered through the countryside) reached a total of 2,272,786 persons at a time when the country's population was estimated at 3,850,771 persons.¹³

^aSource: Instituto Agrario Nacional, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela, p. 28.

An unsettling change had been taking place in the meantime. In spite of all difficulties, agriculture and livestock had been the backbone of Venezuela's economy until the commercial exploitation of oil early in this century. When the latter took place, a complex transformation in the economy occurred. The rural population abandoned the land and migrated toward the oil fields and toward the cities, drawn by the need of labor in the production, refining, and marketing of petroleum and its allied industries as well as by the opening of new service jobs. Agriculture was soon relegated to a secondary position. The

¹³ Compare these figures with Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 350. One acre=0.404 Ha (hectare); one square mile=259 Ha.

Venezuelan currency, the bolívar, became "strong" for the first time and it became easier and usually cheaper to import foodstuffs than produce them at home. The production levels of the large estates fell and the profits from agriculture became very limited.¹⁴

Thus, the expansion and consolidation of the latifundia system during the Gómez period was not paralleled by prosperity in the national agricultural sector; rather, the decline in agricultural production became more accentuated during the dictatorship and was accompanied by a critical influx of the rural population into the newly opened oil fields and the flourishing cities.¹⁵ At the same time, the dimension of unused land became more pronounced; the urban population grew while less and less food was produced to sustain it.

The great differences in urban and rural income distribution also helped stimulate the migration from the country to the city; and in the last decade of Gómez' rule, Venezuela was fast becoming more urban than rural. This sudden shift in turn contributed to cultural dualism, and it would be accurate to say that Venezuela's cities became

¹⁴ Ramón David León, De Agro-Pecuario a Petróleo (Caracas: Tipografía Garrido, 1944); Siso Martínez, Historia de Venezuela, pp. 647-649.

¹⁵ Pola E. Ortiz and Yoland D. Shaya, "El Exodo Rural Venezolano: Sus Causas y la Acción para Resolverlo," Política, III (September-December, 1964), 93-111; Aníbal Buitrón, Exodo Rural en Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1955).

populated by rural people. People migrated, but neither at their origin nor at their destination were there mechanisms or institutions to accelerate the change of attitudes that could ameliorate the differences between traditionalism and modernism.¹⁶

Further, the new economic bases, supported almost solely by the oil revenues, created new ways of life. In place of the old, austere, restricted and uncertain life, there came another with its own ways and its own problems that had to be attended to. The country was clearly divided into two distinct spheres--that of the people who lived from the new extractive industry, and that of those who vegetated, with difficulty, in the mold of the traditional economy, incapable of meeting the demands of a more complex life.

Agriculture and livestock were increasingly abandoned, and it became steadily more difficult to correct the imbalance and distortion which occurred in the traditional sources of the country's wealth. The concentration of capital, industry, and labor in the cities was not accompanied by a comparable advent of new farming methods nor a change in the age-old relationships between landowner and agricultural labor. Agricultural production continued to fall far below the level needed to satisfy national

¹⁶ Ahumada, "Hypotheses for the Diagnosis of a Situation of Social Change: The Case of Venezuela," in Bonilla and Silva Michelena, (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, pp. 25-40.

demands, and more than half the population became submerged in a sort of sub-economy. To aggravate the status of the campesino, his political rights continued to be practically nonexistent--he could not vote and he was not asked to vote. No one attempted to organize him and thus perhaps give him, in collectivity, a measure of power and influence over his own destiny. In the stifling atmosphere of the Gómez dictatorship the meager efforts toward organization that were made concentrated almost exclusively on the urban elements;¹⁷ the campesino remained, as in the days of the Spanish and in the days of the caudillos, a political nonentity.

The First Agrarian Reform Programs--PRP and ORVE

The situation created by these social, economic, and political conditions was brought into sharp focus by the death of Gómez in 1935. The country was jolted brusquely into a new era of freedom and open expression. The political leaders who flocked back to Venezuela from exile returned with a broader economic, social, and ideological perspective, and they immediately began demanding from the government a reshaping of the rural economy through agrarian reform. From 1936 on, peasant unions, associations,

¹⁷G. D. H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought, Vol. IV, Pt. II: Communism and Social Democracy, 1914-1931 (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 750-761; Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, p. 144. Lavin explains that "Gómez associated labor unions with Communism. . . . Their very existence . . . would engender anarchy and lead to the inevitable overthrow of government." Ibid., p. 426.

and leagues were organized in the countryside, with the ultimate goal of obtaining land for the peasants, improving their working conditions, and giving the campesino a voice in the government.

The Partido Republicano Progresista (PRP) and the Movimiento de Organización Venezolana (ORVE) had emerged shortly after the death of Gómez and the imposition of a less strict dictatorship by General Eleazar López Contreras. The PRP, made up of a number of workers and students, adopted more radical positions than the ORVE and was later considered a full-fledged Communist group.¹⁸

The agrarian question was amply covered in the PRP program--parceling of latifundia, distribution of lands, abolition of hereditary debts and of payment in kind rather than cash, the elimination of serfdom, governmental credit for the campesino, application of modern agricultural methods, raising of the rural standards of living, regulation of rural settlement and the influx of immigrants, etc. The ORVE program was not as explicit, even though its political orientation and basis were very similar to those of the PRP at this time.

These two political groups diverged also in their attitude toward the government of López Contreras. The PRP declared its opposition to the government while ORVE's position was that López Contreras could indeed claim to

¹⁸ Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 79-90.

have brought a measure of liberalization in comparison to the undiluted dictatorship of Gómez. In addition, ORVE did have some of its leaders, members, and sympathizers working for the López Contreras government. Gallegos, who would later be the Acción Democrática candidate for President, was Minister of Education at the invitation of López Contreras. ORVE's support, however, was never unconditional and as the government moved towards renewed repression, ORVE became increasingly critical and oppositionist.¹⁹

This second phase of ORVE is of particular interest because it is at this time that this political group becomes more explicit in its agrarian reform proposals. ORVE's general assembly met in July, 1936, in order to ratify a program which had emerged from consultations and discussions with various groups. This program dealt with the agrarian problems in considerable detail and made suggestions for their solution. Among these was a call for legislation prohibiting the sale of the common lands (ejidos) and, instead, their lease to campesinos, while ownership remained in the hands of the state. Investigating commissions would be created to check on the legitimacy of possessing unused lands and the retaking of such lands by the state. A national land survey would be undertaken in order to provide the necessary statistical data for agrarian

¹⁹ Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela, pp. 2-4.

reform programs and use of the ejidos.²⁰ The State was to provide the peasant the necessary tools and seeds as well as to stimulate the creation of cooperatives for the processing of agricultural products. Agricultural colonies would be established to handle the raising of those crops that needed extensive land. These colonies would be provided with the necessary irrigation, electricity, and means of transportation.

Needless to say, this ambitious program was never implemented. It did, however, contribute to a new awareness of the dimensions of the agrarian problem. The Constitution of 1936 had nothing to say on the matter of

²⁰ This suggested use of ejidos was not a novel idea by any means and it may have been borrowed from the Mexican agrarian reform. See Henrik F. Infield and Koka Freier, People in Ejidos (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954); Andrés Molina Enríquez, La Revolución Agraria de México (5 vols.; México: Talleres Gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia, Etnografía, 1933-1937); Eyler N. Simpson, The Ejido--Mexico's Way Out (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1937); Frank Tannenbaum, The Mexican Agrarian Reform (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929). There is evidence that the Mexican agrarian reform had a perceptible impact upon agrarian reform ideas of adeco leaders and later in the AD-sponsored agrarian reform laws of 1948 and 1960; see Rafael Silva Guillén, La Reforma Agraria en Venezuela (Caracas: Instituto Agrario Nacional, 1962); Robert J. Alexander, "Nature and Progress of Agrarian Reform in Latin America," Journal of Economic History, XXIII (December, 1963), 559-573; and Ana Derbez, "Panorama de la Reforma Agraria Integral en América Latina," Anuario Indigenista [Mexico], XXIII (1963), 15-38. Betancourt, in his Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 353 and 405 affirms that the agrarian reform proposed by AD used to advantage the Mexican experience in this policy area. A comparison between certain aspects of the two agrarian reforms appears in Peter P. Lord, "The Peasantry as an Emerging Political Factor in Mexico, Bolivia, and Venezuela" (Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, May, 1965), pp. 1-40, 89-99. (Mimeographed.)

improving the campesino's lot or of reversing the general decline of agricultural production. But interest in land reform, a long dormant issue during the Gómez dictatorship, was revived. López Contreras was compelled to declare that there was a need for the colonization of unused or virgin land and he created a commission to study and to implement such a plan.²¹

The Agricultural Thesis of the Partido Democrático Nacional

The ORVE had a short life once it became oppositionist and bolder in its presentation of a program that challenged the long-established pattern of agricultural exploitation. It was succeeded in 1937 by the Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN), an organization that survived and expanded underground until 1941, when it was permitted to function openly under the name of Acción Democrática, AD. It was during this period following 1936 that the beginnings of campesino organization took place. Future campesino leaders Ramón Quijada and Tomás Alberti, as well as Rómulo Betancourt himself, began to make themselves known in the interior during these years, thus laying the foundation for AD's future labor and campesino movements. A first step towards formal organization was taken when Francisco Olivo was named the PDN peasant movement secretary.²²

²¹ Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, pp. 71-74; Allen, Venezuela, pp. 163-172, 198-211; Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 203-207.

²² Magallanes, Partidos Políticos Venezolanos, pp. 73-112.

What López Contreras considered "extremist politicians," among them pedenistas, continued to keep agrarian discontent alive.²³ These "extremists" were responsible for the presentation to the Congress in 1939 of a comprehensive agrarian reform law project.²⁴ Heated debate ensued, with the pedenista deputies calling for the expropriation of lands "badly cultivated." This vague terminology undermined their efforts because, as the government-majority in Congress was quick to point out, most of the Venezuelan lands could indeed be considered "badly cultivated"--from the inefficient subsistence plot of the campesino to the unmechanized latifundia used in extensive agriculture or in cattle-breeding. Thus they accused the opposition in reality of threatening all landowners for the sake of a vague agrarian reform program. The opposition further weakened its case by threatening to "bring the peasants to the Chamber to impose the Agrarian Law."²⁵ Such a threat, which would have been impossible to carry out since the campesinos were still largely unorganized and leaderless, served only to substantiate the government's

²³López Contreras, El Triunfo de la Verdad, passim.

²⁴The political and programmatic bases of the PDN, including its agrarian reform proposals, appear in Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 9-51.

²⁵Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, p. 72.

charge that the agrarian reform project was in reality a cover for "Communism."²⁶

It would be a mistake, however, to view the PDN's debate of the agrarian issue as without any impact. Not only did it bring to the front of the news the seriousness of the campesino's plight, but it also forced the government into creating its own National Agrarian Party (PAN) to organize campesino support for López Contreras. The PAN program called for preventive legislation against the creation of latifundia (but not their parceling) and the avoidance of minifundia; the construction of storehouses throughout the countryside; the establishment of enterprises to process raw materials; and the selective distribution of government lands. It implicitly rejected any type of expropriation and limited itself to stressing the social function of the land unit. Besides the usual list of relatives of López Contreras and government officials, the PAN included among its founders Arturo Uslar Pietri and Manuel R. Egaña, both of whom would later cooperate with or be part of the AD.²⁷

²⁶There are no official figures for a reliable estimate of the number of organized peasants at this time. Luis Morillo, a long time organizer of campesinos and a founding member of ORVE, PDN, and AD estimated that in 1936 there were about 200 leaders in the First Venezuelan Congress of Workers, who represented 100,000 semi-organized campesinos. These figures are considered inflated; see Powell, Preliminary Report on the Federación Campesina de Venezuela, pp. 2 and 35.

²⁷Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, p. 73.

The first national convention of the PDN took place in September of 1939 and devoted its attention to a summary of what it considered the major Venezuelan problems, and to a program for their resolution. It concluded that for Venezuela to overcome its backwardness and its subordination to international capital as well as to extirpate the latifundist "cancer," it was necessary to undertake a profound transformation in the economic and political structures of the country. Such a transformation would allow the productive forces of the country to come to their full fruition. In order for this transformation to take place it was essential that there emerge in Venezuela a political organization that was popular and multiclass. This organization would channel the popular desire for freedom and direct that desire towards the economic and political transformation of the country. Such a political organization was embodied in the PDN since all other political organizations then existent failed to compare with it in its truly democratic character, open to all sectors of the Venezuelan society. The Partido Nacional, made up of the few beneficiaries of the status quo, represented those sectors that were the exploiters of the great majority of Venezuelans. A center party such as the PAN was unable to bring about such broad transformations since it called for only limited reforms and also because its basis was very narrow. A class party such as the Communist also was unqualified to undertake the task of bringing about the modernization and liberalization of Venezuela. The rigid

programs, the adherence to Moscow, as well as the fact that the Venezuelan proletariat was still relatively small, prevented the Communists from becoming, as AD did, the channel between all Venezuelans and their government.²⁸

The PDN's agrarian reform program included these major points:

- (1) Parceling of confiscated lands that formerly had belonged to Gómez as well as those that had been acquired through graft and corruption during his regime. These lands would be given in usufruct to the campesinos. Intensive promotion of immigration. Planned creation of mixed agricultural colonies of immigrants and natives and of natives only in well-selected plots. Creation of cooperatives of agricultural and animal production for transaction of essential businesses in order to free the campesino from the exploitation by creditors.²⁹
- (2) Legislation to limit the size of land plots and their parceling for the maximum benefit of the true producer--the campesino. Recovery of those lands which had formerly belonged to the State and grant of common lands (ejidos) for those municipalities that never had them. Creation of agrarian communities and land grants to Indians. Incorporation of the Indian in the national life and special legislation for his protection.
- (3) Protective measures for campesino debtors; their liberation from perpetual indebtedness to exploiting landowners. Cessation of payment of the campesino through tokens in kind rather than cash and of the campesino's obligation to pay for his debts through personal services. Abolition of those debts that had been passed from generation to generation of campesinos through the unscrupulous practices of landowners and creditors. Use of idle lands for socially beneficial ends.

²⁸ Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 11-41.

²⁹ The cooperatives envisaged by the PDN decades ago have now been realized; see American Institute for Free Labor Development, Cooperative Movement in Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: AIFLD, 1963).

- (4) Provision by the State of seeds and tools to poor peasants in coordination with a system of credit in agriculture and breeding. Preferential treatment by the government to peasant leagues and similar organizations.
- (5) Planned irrigation systems. Roads to facilitate the exchange of products between rural and urban centers.
- (6) Modernization of agriculture. Creation by the State of agricultural schools and research centers. State help in the obtaining of machinery and fertilizers.³⁰

This comprehensive project was further refined by the PDN and by its successor, Acción Democrática. AD, though coming to power in 1945, was unable to pursue the agrarian reform project to its fullest implications and had to wait until a decade and a half later to implement it in a comprehensive manner. In the interim, a number of events took place that would leave their impact on the 1960 Agrarian Reform Law sponsored by AD as well as provide that law with many institutions for its administration.

Agrarian Reform in the Acción Democrática Trienio

During General Medina Angarita's government (1941-1945), the agrarian question became ever more publicly discussed.³¹ It was no longer possible for the government to ignore the problem altogether or to support only very limited

³⁰This is a summary of the PDN agrarian reform program which appears in Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 47-48.

³¹Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia, pp. 63-74.

measures. AD leaders persevered in the organization of campesinos at the same time that they insisted that there was an urgent need to improve their conditions. The pressure mounted and while in May, 1945, the government "categorically subscribed to the thesis that an agrarian reform law should not be promulgated [that] year,"³² by September it was publishing a Ley Agraria.³³ Thus, the organizational efforts and the insistence of the AD leadership, together with the more liberal and democratic leanings of President Medina himself, had led the government to promulgate an agrarian reform law which, although it was never implemented, constituted a real triumph for the adecos.³⁴

Since the Medina government was succeeded by an AD-led Junta less than a month after the Agrarian Law was promulgated, it is not necessary to go into detail here about that piece of legislation. Suffice it to say that it did not satisfy anyone; the government supporters, especially the landowners, resented a possible threat to their status; the opposition assailed the law as pitifully limited in its scope. The adecos contended that the Ley Agraria de 1945 was an inadequate instrument to solve the agrarian problem since it encouraged land speculation, restricted land distribution, and continued to deny the campesino a voice in

³²La Esfera (June, 1945), p. 1.

³³Gaceta Oficial (número extraordinario 149) of September 20, 1945.

³⁴Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 207-213.

the handling of his affairs. Thus, a law which had aroused great interest and hope through its debate, failed in fulfilling any expectations.

The October, 1945, coup brought to power those who had been fighting for agrarian reform for years. Betancourt made a point to tell the campesinos that they now enjoyed rights and guarantees that would be respected and fostered by the new government. Further, the campesinos were told that they were guaranteed the land they already worked on. Campesinos, some led by adecos but many others on their own initiative, seized large estates they considered rightfully theirs. Credit was extended by the Agricultural and Livestock Bank, which from its founding in 1928 onwards had granted credit only to large landowners. The regulation of rural working conditions, which had been on the books since the López Contreras' administration but which had never been enforced, was now implemented.³⁵

In addition--and perhaps most important--the October coup ushered in the beginning of government by political party and of the electoral enfranchisement of the people. The AD-controlled revolutionary Junta introduced a new electoral law in March, 1946, providing for universal suffrage, thus removing voting restrictions against women and illiterate (most Venezuelan campesinos could neither read nor write at

³⁵Armando R. González P., Agrarian Reform as Seen by the Labor Movement in Agriculture, pp. 4-5.

that time). The 1947 Constitution permitted election of the President and of the Congress directly by the people and guaranteed the right to organize. Assisted by the Ministry of Labor, which had been created in 1945, the farm labor movement expanded its organizing efforts and the Peasant Federation of Venezuela (FCV) was officially established in June of 1947.³⁶ Thus the framework was laid not only for the electoral participation of the vast majority of Venezuelans but also for the organization of the worker and the peasant as new political pressure groups. New elements had been introduced into the body politic. For the first time campesinos were being organized and urged to vote, to participate in discussions involving their own affairs, and to select their own representatives before the government.

The trienio also witnessed the creation of the Consejo Económico Nacional (National Economic Council, CEN), an agency provided for in the 1936 Constitution but never established by intervening governments. The Corporación Venezolana de Fomento (CVF, Venezuelan Development Corporation) was empowered to invest in and aid both agriculture and industry. Concentrating principally on the former in the adeco trienio, the CVF sponsored better methods in the production of meat, milk, and sugar. Since the adecos envisaged an even greater activity by the CVF, it was given

³⁶ Lieuwen, Venezuela, pp. 71-78; Federación Campesina de Venezuela, La Cuestión Agraria Venezolana: Tesis Política y Programática de la Federación Campesina de Venezuela (Caracas: Tipografía Americana, 1948).

a minimum of 10% of the government's annual budget.³⁷ Additional funds were given to the Banco Agrícola y Pecuario (BAP) and the Banco Industrial, both of which had been established prior to 1945. The capital of the BAP was increased by three and a half times between 1945 and 1947, while that of the Banco Industrial rose 250% in the same period. The BAP paid particular attention to small farmers, and although the total credit extended by the Bank rose little more than 100% between 1946 and 1948, the number of beneficiaries of the Bank's operations rose almost 400% during the same period. The government also spent considerable sums for the mechanization of agriculture and completed several small irrigation projects.³⁸ All these efforts paid off in increased production--sugar rose from 1.95 million metric tons to 2.37 between 1945 and 1948; peas, from 8,000 metric tons to double that amount; potatoes from 9,185 metric tons to 16,000.³⁹

The studies on agrarian reform ordered by Betancourt were chiefly responsible for the provisions contained in the 1948 Agrarian Reform Law, passed by the newly elected Congress, dominated by Acción Democrática deputies and

³⁷ Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, pp. 255-256.

³⁸ Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 236-259, 314-358.

³⁹ Corporación Venezolana de Fomento, Cuadernos de Información (Caracas: CVF, May-June, 1950), cited by Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 328.

senators. This Law provided for better working conditions for the peasant and for the expropriation of private land needed for the agrarian reform. The owners would receive compensation partly in cash and partly in government bonds. The Instituto Agrario Nacional (IAN, National Agrarian Institute), was empowered to grant land to colonies of peasants, who would own their land plots, but who would not be empowered to sell them without permission of the IAN; to cooperatives, in which land would be communally owned; and to individual peasants who would enjoy full property rights.⁴⁰ This Law, having been passed on the eve of the overthrow of the Gallegos regime, did not go into effect. It served, however, as the basis for the agrarian reform law that was enacted in 1960 by the Betancourt government.

Some have suggested that this far-ranging agrarian reform law and the campesino agitation that preceded it, with the seizure of land by peasants, were major reasons for the overthrow of President Gallegos a few months after he had been duly elected to succeed the Betancourt Junta.⁴¹ This is a moot question, though undoubtedly some landholders

⁴⁰ This again has much similarity to the Mexican agrarian reform. See *supra*, chap. VI, n. 20. For the 1948 Law and its debate, see El Nacional (September 15, 1948), pp. A-1ff.

⁴¹ Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, pp. 135-165, especially p. 159. Lord concluded that "the agrarian reform may have been the straw that broke the conservatives' back" and became one of the primary causes of the 1948 coup. Lord, "The Peasantry as an Emerging Political Factor," p. 67.

became violent in their denunciation of Acción Democrática when they felt a real threat in the AD-led campesino leagues and in the AD-sponsored agrarian reform law. It is also probably true that some military elements saw the campesino seizure of land as the first step toward public disorder and perhaps the eventual emergence of a campesino militia which would, in turn, threaten the regular military.⁴² On the other hand, campesinos themselves had reason to be less than completely satisfied with the AD accomplishments in the trienio and its agrarian law. There had been many promises, but their fulfillment took time.⁴³

Many other problems besides the agrarian question beset the Junta led by Betancourt. Some of these problems appeared more formidable and required more immediate attention. Furthermore, it had always been AD's contention that agrarian reform should be undertaken only after careful preliminary studies that would outline a long-range program dealing with all aspects--economic, social, political--of the agrarian question. Thus, while Betancourt found himself

⁴²Vallenilla Lanz, Escrito de Memoria, pp. 109-136; Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, pp. 255-258.

⁴³Betancourt always insisted that a successful agrarian reform in Venezuela had to be gradual, that studies had to be undertaken, and that land and credit, seeds, machinery, irrigation, etc., had to be considered; Betancourt, Venezuela. Política y Petróleo, p. 405. The extreme Leftists, for their part, insisted that Betancourt's methods showed "cowardice" and "a concession to the reactionaries." See Fernández y Fernández, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela, p. 72.

immersed in the day-to-day running of the government and in the sheer struggle to survive the increasing opposition by the military and political groups, the agrarian question was being studied. It was not until 1948 that an Agrarian Reform Law was passed; but before it could be put into effect, President Gallegos was overthrown by a military coup and the government changed hands once more.⁴⁴

Agrarian Reform in Reverse

With the 1948 to 1958 regimes of Delgado Chalbaud and Pérez Jiménez, the auspicious start given to agrarian reform came to a virtual halt. With the ouster of Gallegos, the possibility of implementing the 1948 agrarian reform law disappeared, for the new government represented the interests of the oligarchy and large landholders and it based its power on the subjection of urban and rural labor to greater and more efficient exploitation. The process of agrarian reform was thus reversed.⁴⁵

In 1949, by decree of the Chalbaud military Junta, the IAN was charged with primary responsibility for colonization and land settlement. It was empowered to use lands from leased municipal ejidos and to purchase or

⁴⁴Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 22-36.

⁴⁵Interview with Armando González, FCV President, Caracas, April 1, 1964; Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, pp. 619-625. For a different appraisal, see Tarnóí, El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela, pp. 243-254.

expropriate idle or inefficiently used privately owned lands of over 741 acres. The avowed purpose was to establish a rural middle class and to promote settlement of owner-operated farm units upon productive lands. The IAN was further empowered to provide various community services for each settlement, including education and health measures.

While on paper the decree was similar to the Acción Democrática program; in practice it actually reversed the process of agrarian reform that had been initiated during the trienio. Colonization measures were limited to settlement of immigrants and displaced persons after World War II, but many of these immigrants abandoned their land for more lucrative city jobs.⁴⁶ Thousands of Venezuelan campesinos fled to the cities where the construction business acted as a magnet for the unskilled and skilled landless peasant. There were indications, further, that the latifundia system was extended while misuse of public funds earmarked for agrarian purposes proliferated.

Pérez Jiménez initiated some spectacular agrarian projects but these, like so many of his undertakings, seemed more for propaganda purposes than for actual benefit to the campesino. A United Nations agricultural expert who visited Venezuela during 1956 and 1957 was highly critical of the ostentatious and poorly planned agrarian projects. Often costly and useless, some of these projects were already

⁴⁶ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 319-320.

in disrepair though they had been erected only prior to his visit. This expert concluded that the traditional latifundia system, uneconomic and unfair to the peasant, had been buttressed by the dictatorship.⁴⁷

In nearly every respect, agrarian reform became stifled or was perverted during the dictatorship years. The agrarian reform law of 1948 was formally annulled in 1952 and replaced by an agrarian statute which provided a legal basis for the abuses and arbitrary actions committed against the peasants. The farms that had been handed over to the campesinos during the AD trienio were seized, the regulation of farm working conditions was abandoned, and peasant leaders were thrown into jail.⁴⁸ By the government's own figures, the expenditures on agriculture in a typical year (1953) were 5.31% less than they had been for a typical year during the trienio.⁴⁹

Just prior to the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez, the latifundia system compared with that encountered 20 years earlier.⁵⁰ If anything, the new figures seemed to show a

⁴⁷ René Dumont, Lands Alive, trans. Suzanne and Gilbert Sale (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1965), pp. 19-29; Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 37-50.

⁴⁸ González, Agrarian Reform as Seen by the Labor Movement in Agriculture, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Memoria del Banco Central (Caracas: Banco Central, 1953), p. 114.

⁵⁰ Supra, chap. VI, Table 8.

further expansion of the system:⁵¹

- (a) The approximately 30 million Ha under exploitation in Venezuela were divided into 398,000 estates.
- (b) 6,759 estates possessed a total of approximately 22 million Ha; that is, an average of 3,143 Ha per unit. That is, less than 1.70% of the total number of farms.
- (c) In view of this latifundist concentration, a corresponding number of peasants cultivated minifundios: 320,000 campesinos cultivated minifundios totalling an area of less than 1,220,000 Ha. That is, 80% of the Venezuelan agricultores possessed only minimum and uneconomic and inefficient plots of land of an average area of less than 3.5 Ha.

The result of this socially unfair land distribution was the worsening of conditions in the countryside and the further extension of the twin evils of latifundia and minifundia. While on the one hand landownership became even more concentrated in the latifundia, on the other the number of plots which were so small as to be uneconomical also increased; both latifundia and minifundia were extended at the expense of the more medium-sized property holdings. To further aggravate the situation, not all those 320,000 campesinos cited worked on their own minifundios. In fact, of the total of almost 398,000 units or plots in Venezuela, only 25% were worked by their owners while almost half (49%) of the plots were worked by people who did not have

⁵¹ Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, p. 320. Marrero was quoting from official sources and his appraisal is the same of many others, such as Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 235-240.

a full title to the land and another 25% were full-fledged sharecroppers.⁵²

The consequences of this system were pernicious to the whole Venezuelan economy. The constant influx of campesinos to the cities continued unabated: between 1920 and 1960 Venezuela changed its urban-rural ratio from 1:3 to 2:1; Caracas, a city of barely 90,000 in the 1920's was nearing the 1.5 million mark in the 1960's.⁵³ Early in 1960 it was reported that the unsanitary ranchos remained the universal dwelling for these transplanted peasants; that less than 13% of the campesino families received an annual income of approximately \$200 (compared to the more than \$800 for the total national average) and that 20% of the campesino families received no more than approximately \$100 a year. This same source pointed out the steady decline of agricultural production and the parallel need to import food. A total of Bs 454 million of agricultural products, mostly foodstuffs, had been imported in 1957.⁵⁴

While agricultural production declined and the importation of foodstuffs became a routine procedure, Pérez

⁵² Raúl Pérez Pereda, "La Reforma Agraria y la Tenencia de la Tierra," Economía y Ciencias Sociales [Caracas], IV (September-December, 1961), 41-46.

⁵³ Ortiz y Shaya, "El Exodo Rural Venezolano," pp. 93-111.

⁵⁴ Victor Giménez Landínez, Exposición de Motivos al Proyecto de Ley de Reforma Agraria (Caracas: Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, 1961), passim.

Jiménez' projects were almost exclusively concentrated on the cities. The few that were built in the campo seemed to be only incidentally concerned with the practical needs of the campesino. With the peasant leagues banned, the campesino had no recourse before the overpowering government in Caracas. Hope for better conditions in the campo, however, re-emerged in 1958 when Pérez Jiménez was overthrown and Acción Democrática reaffirmed its determination to push forward again with the task of agrarian reform, a task barely begun a decade earlier during the AD governmental trienio.⁵⁵

The Integrated Agrarian Reform Law of 1960

In every respect, agrarian reform seemed to have been stifled and reversed during the dictatorship years. With the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez on January 23, 1958, a new democratic era dawned in Venezuela. There was an immediate revival of peasant organizations which had survived clandestinely for years. Campesino unions and leagues once more made their voices heard; they had been repressed but never dominated by the dictatorship. The injustices they had suffered during almost ten years of iron rule and the miserable economic situation in which they had been kept led peasant elements to a series of excesses in the struggle to regain their rights. They invaded farms which they had owned during the 1945-1948 trienio, returning without due

⁵⁵Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 159-172.

authorization but perhaps with the complacency of AD-campesino leaders to the lands they had occupied before, from which they had been ejected by Pérez Jiménez-backed landlords. The critical economic and political situation of the country was most clearly reflected in the fact that 45% of the population suffered the worst possible living conditions in the wealthiest Latin-American country.

The peasant agitation and seizure of land could very well lead to a counter coup supported by landlords and military still loyal to Pérez Jiménez. A similar situation had contributed to the downfall of President Gallegos in 1948,⁵⁶ and now, in 1958, in the fluid and chaotic weeks that followed the overthrow of the dictator, it could again rob the popular forces led by Acción Democrática of their victory. Now, even more than during the trienio, it was imperative that the agrarian question be settled. Any delay might prove fatal--either the campesinos would be crushed in their demands through a rightist coup or the campesinos would take matters in their own hands with further land seizure--with again the spectre of a rightist reaction not far off.

Understanding the implications of the agrarian question, the new provisional government established a

⁵⁶ Ahumada explains that in 1948 "the economic sector did not accept the economic and social reforms promulgated by AD and some army officers found irresistible the rewards it could expect from a grateful government through whose hands circulated more than 20% of the national income." Ahumada, in Bonilla and Silva Michelena, eds., Studying the Venezuelan Polity, p. 42.

National Commission of Agrarian Reform in late September, 1958, and instructed it to start work immediately on a draft for a new agrarian reform law. Perhaps remembering the fate of the 1948 law which never had a chance for implementation, the government made a serious attempt to bring into this Commission various points of view.⁵⁷ In the Commission discussions, there was far more than the mere question of a new legal measure to be drafted. An honest and sincere attempt was made to deal with and to try to find a solution to the country's deep economic and social problems aggravated by political factors.⁵⁸ There was an effort to have all interests represented in the Commission and to give the draft law the character of a national undertaking aimed at meeting a fundamental problem toward whose solution the entire community contributed. The Commission was subdivided into four subcommissions--social, legal, economic, and agronomic. Among those active in the preparation of the draft were the Caracas archbishop Mon. Rafael Arias Blanco, as well as representatives of the Federación Campesina, of the Asociación de Hacendados, and many others. The resulting draft was to reflect the views which prevailed in the sub-commissions, with the social, political, and institutional aspects, however, having become

⁵⁷ Interview with Armando González, FGV President, Caracas, April 1, 1964.

⁵⁸ Venezuela, Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, Comisión Nacional de Reforma Agraria, Reforma Agraria (Caracas: MAC, 1960).

dominant in the law.⁵⁹

The Federación Campesina de Venezuela (FCV) made clear that the agrarian reform law should not be limited to a reform with the sole objective of overcoming the production deficit through the use of modern techniques and tools in crop cultivation. If this had happened, the misery and the general living conditions of those 45% of the population who lived in a marginal state in the campo would have continued to be the same as before or worse. The relationships between peasants and landowners would merely be replaced by a new set of relationships between landowners and salaried workers. The country would have been freed from the necessity of importing food but the market would have continued to be confined to the same population and the growth possibilities of industry would have been hamstrung in turn by the lack of rural purchasing power. The hacendados, for their part, were most interested in being assured that no expropriation take place where lands were being profitably used. A compromise was reached between these two views by making the law flexible to suit the varying circumstances.⁶⁰

⁵⁹George Coutsoumaris, "Policy Objectives in Latin American Land Reform with Special Reference to Venezuela," *Inter-American Economic Affairs*, XVI (Autumn, 1962), 25-44. Mr. Coutsoumaris, a former adviser to the MAC, concludes that the "recent land reform policy in Venezuela has been based on an . . . integrated approach, . . . one seeking a thoroughgoing change in the existing structure. The result has been that social and political objectives, such as greater equality in the distribution of income and wealth and social and political stability through widespread land ownership . . . were mixed with aspirations for economic progress and for improved agricultural productivity." *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶⁰Venezuela. Congreso Nacional, La Ley de Reforma

The Agrarian Reform Law of March, 1960, was notable for its coverage, for it dealt not only with problems of land tenure, but also with other aspects of a comprehensive agricultural policy. Thus, the label integrated agrarian reform, a label which has been employed in many government publications and in various private studies of the agrarian question, is appropriate. The Law assigned a social function to land ownership and the right to hold land was made subject to this condition.⁶¹

Under the concept of "social function of the landed property," only three kinds of land are subject to expropriation: uncultivated land; farms worked indirectly through renters, sharecroppers, and other intermediaries; and lands suitable for cultivation but devoted to natural pasture for extensive livestock raising. A further provision states that private lands can be expropriated only if no publicly-owned properties are available in the same area. The law also fixes the absolute size limits below which private land cannot be expropriated. However, in certain cases of serious land pressure, land can be expropriated without regard to size and land use criteria.⁶² This final

Agraria en las Cámaras Legislativas (2 vols.; Caracas: Congreso Nacional, 1960).

⁶¹ "Integrated Agrarian Reform," p. 91; Giménez Landínez, La Reforma Agraria Integral, pp. 1-55; Coutsoumaris, "Policy Objectives," pp. 25-44; Armando González, "Reforma Agraria y Superación Nacional," Política, III (September-December, 1964), 25-44; Pedro París Montesinos, "Proyecciones Socio-Económicas de la Reforma Agraria en Venezuela," Ensayos [Quito] (August, 1963), 32-40; Rómulo Betancourt, Problemas del Campo Venezolano (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1959); Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 169-170.

⁶² Venezuela, Instituto Agrario Nacional, Manual de

clause has not been pushed by the AD governments.

Under the law, present occupants, tenants, and agricultural laborers will be given first preference to land parcels. The lands taken over are to be paid for in cash up to Bs 100,000 (approximately \$30,000); above this the payment is to be partly in cash and partly in bonds. Payment is to be made at current market value. The sales price to new owners includes the cost of purchase plus improvements, and the payment can be extended over a period of 20 to 30 years, with annual amounts not to exceed 5% of gross income from sales of produce. In some cases land can be distributed free of charge. Once the application for land has been accepted by the IAN, applicants are required to form an administrative committee to handle local affairs and to act as liaison with the IAN. Often these committees are, for all practical purposes, made up of the same people who form the FGV unit in a particular locality. Provisional titles are extended after one year. Permanent titles are issued once the farmer has paid for his land in full. At the end of 1966, 131,250 families had received land from the IAN.⁶³

In addition to setting forth these new regulations controlling land tenure, the law contains provisions for the imposition of graduated land taxes in order to force owners

Procedimientos para Avaluos de Fincas (Caracas: IAN, 1965).

⁶³ Política, VI (February, 1967), 86.

of large farms to cultivate their properties more intensively or to sell them. Further articles deal with farm credit, marketing, extension services, cooperatives, peasant leagues, land development, and other supplementary measures.⁶⁴ The cumulative effect of all these measures--dealing with economic, social, and political factors--justifies the label given to the Venezuelan law as being an integrating agrarian reform law. Not surprisingly, to implement all these objectives, a host of agencies is directly involved.

Agencies for Agrarian Reform Implementation

Action in planning, coordination and development in agriculture has been assumed almost exclusively by the government--more specifically, by the executive branch. This has given added power and prestige to the president; and if it is true that he may be blamed for the failures in the agrarian reform program, it is equally true that he is the first and foremost in reaping the praise--and the votes--from those who have in any measure benefitted from the program. Thus, his central role in agrarian reform and the political profits derived from it is another reason why the presidency is such a coveted prize for all Venezuelan

⁶⁴Venezuela, Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, Exposición de Motivos al Proyecto de Ley de Reforma Agraria. Ley de Reforma Agraria (Caracas: MAC, 1961); Instituto Agrario Nacional, Ley de Reforma Agraria (Caracas: IAN, 1960). Both have the full text of the Law.

parties.⁶⁵ By the same token, the opposition parties find it particularly advantageous to try to undermine the agrarian reform program--the more the program fails, the greater becomes the chance for the opposition to attain the presidential chair, come election time. Finally, where agrarian reform becomes so deeply involved in the political process, as it does in Venezuela, the crucial necessity of having a widely-based political support for agrarian reform is understandable if it is to be given a chance to survive long enough to be implemented and to eventually become part and parcel of the central political issues of the country. It is to these topics that we devote the remaining portion of this chapter.

The Venezuelan executive, in addition to setting goals of growth and carrying out the "integrated" agrarian reform program, has taken an active part in capitalization, technical study, and in some cases actual operations, in order to raise and improve the standard of living of the rural population and to incorporate it into the nation's economy. The general government planning agency, CORDIPLAN, includes agricultural planning in its scope.⁶⁶ The three governmental agencies which in practice bear most of the

⁶⁵See *supra*, chap. II; Shelp, "Latin American Leadership in Transition: Legitimacy vs. Personalismo," pp. 27-34.

⁶⁶See chap. VIII; John Friedmann, Venezuela, from Doctrine to Dialogue (Syracuse, N.Y.: University of Syracuse Press, 1965). Friedmann argues persuasively that CORDIPLAN is an outstanding example of an agency for democratic planning.

responsibility for planning and executing agricultural development programs are the National Agrarian Institute (IAN), the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAC), and the Agricultural and Livestock Bank (BAP). Other agencies such as the Ministries of Health, of Public Works, and of Education, are in charge of certain aspects of the program while the Peasants' Federation (FCV) is the most important nongovernmental agency involved.⁶⁷

The IAN, according to the Ley Agraria, is the main agency in charge of the administration of lands. Its directorate must plan and implement the settlement and agrarian reform projects. The Institute acquires and purchases land and decides the amount to be paid for the land, the size of the land parcels, and the identity of the beneficiaries. The law provides that the IAN be run by a directorate consisting of a president and four directors, two of whom represent campesino organizations and another who is a professional agronomist. All the members are appointed by the president of the country.

Between 1960 and 1965 the IAN distributed land to 108,093 families. It also made large investments in land clearance and grading, drainage and irrigation, public services and utilities, technical assistance, farm credit and marketing facilities connected with its settlement program. During the first nine months of 1966, 2,885

⁶⁷Victor Alba, "La Reforme Agraire au Venezuela," Revue Socialiste [Paris] (February, 1963), 147-151.

hectares of land were brought under irrigation, at a cost of 26.7 million bolivars; 362 miles of access roads were built in agricultural areas and another 715 miles were repaired or reconstructed, at a total cost of 18 million bolivars. During those nine months land was distributed to 11,291 rural families.⁶⁸

The IAN is aided in its agricultural colonization program by numerous other agencies. If the land is virgin, the Ministry of Public Works (MOP) may have to build penetration roads. In most cases, when the IAN distributes land to the campesinos or charters a cooperative, it plans for basic utilities and either provides the power, water, schools, and houses itself or calls in other agencies.⁶⁹

The MAC is the coordinating center for other governmental and private agencies engaged in agrarian reform. It is concerned with production factors such as output projections, productivity of resources, rural mechanization, cooperatives and extension services and research. Thus the Ministry not only has the main responsibility of providing technical assistance to the producer through the Extension Service, but also of obtaining data and promoting research to improve and train the extension service agents themselves.

⁶⁸ Inter-American Development Bank, *Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 1967), p. 381.

⁶⁹ González, "Reforma Agraria y Superación Nacional," pp. 25-44.

The BAP concerns itself with loans and credits to farmers and livestock producers. It is active in carrying out the agrarian reform by providing credits for seeds, tools, and living expenses to the campesinos. It makes loans or gives credit to individuals and cooperatives. The campesinos usually pledge a portion of their crop at a supported price as collateral, and the BAP subsequently markets the crop or stores it for the next year's seed. The BAP also offers loans to the larger commercial farmers,⁷⁰ but these loans are administered by the MAC. Other activities include an intricate and graduated price support program for staple products, and the operation of storage facilities, such as grain elevators, dryers, and warehouses. In addition, the BAP has sole authority to import agricultural products; it exercises this right only when the domestic crop falls short of internal demand.⁷¹

In addition to the three entities mentioned above, there are also bimonthly meetings of a coordinating committee, comprised of representatives from the MAC, the IAN, and BAP, and the FCV. The Minister of Agriculture and

⁷⁰In fact the BAP was originally created for the purpose of making loans to large agricultural and livestock enterprises. This is not generally known and the fact that the BAP makes such loans is a source of frequent criticism of the agency.

⁷¹Ciro Mujica, "Planificación del Crédito dentro de la Reforma Agraria," Política, III (September-December, 1964), 45-54; Ricardo De Sola, "Almacenamiento y Conservación de Productos Agrícolas," Política, III (September-December, 1964), 55-76.

Livestock is the president of the Coordinating Committee and has the duty of giving direction to the agrarian reform and insuring efficient joint effort. The success of this body is in some question, since politics and group jealousies tend to hamper the making of decisions.

The role of private capital in long-range development has been small and generally confined to service activities. The Rural Welfare Council has been active in area and development studies and in technical services on a contract basis. The emphasis has been on studies of needs and problems within a particular field which have usually not taken the whole farm as an integrated economic unit, but rather have considered separate segments of its activities. The Shell Service for the Agriculturalist has been instrumental in popularizing insecticides and fungicides, for example.

The tobacco companies have also been active in extending advice and credit to the tobacco growers. Government efforts to secure a more active participation of private capital in agriculture recently induced the Creole Investment Corporation (CIC) to acquire a 48% share in a model breeding ranch and also to enlarge a plant for the development of hybrid seed corn. Perhaps the most intensive activity of the private sector has been in technical and extension services.⁷²

⁷²Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development, Inventory of Information Basic to the Planning of Agricultural Development in Latin America: Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1964), especially pp. 39-50.

It is generally conceded that the Venezuelan agrarian reform program did not move as fast as Acción Democrática leaders had hoped that it would.⁷³ Besides the natural difficulties of implementing any ambitious and broad program such as that provided for in the 1960 Agrarian Reform Law, the problems of judicial procedure for granting provisional titles to land, the political problems, the lack of trained personnel, and the lack of agencies appropriate to implement and to coordinate the program all contributed to the lack of total success.

The IAN, the BAP, and the MAC all had been inherited from other administrations and all of them had been re-fashioned to suit Pérez Jiménez. They had served purposes very different from those for which the AD regimes needed them, and the process of transforming them into organizations capable of carrying out a fundamental change in the economic and social structure was not easy. With a critical scarcity of trained personnel, it was neither feasible administratively nor wise politically for the AD administrations to pare or streamline these institutions.

Coordination of the activities of the agencies administering the program presented further complications. This situation was aggravated by the fact that these three agencies were controlled by different political combinations--combinations which became further strained with the breakdown

⁷³Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 181-193.

of government coalitions and splits within AD itself. The IAN was dominated from the beginning by Acción Democrática, though COPEI and later URD were represented in its directorate. The MAC was in the beginning in the hands of COPEI, later coming under URD during the Leoni government. Reportedly, Leoni's refusal to allow COPEI to remain at the head of the MAC stimulated that party's departure from the governmental coalition that had existed during Betancourt's administration.⁷⁴ The BAP was headed for the first two and a half years of the Betancourt administration by an independent, under whose administration the Communists and the MIR had a great deal of influence. It finally passed to AD hands in the middle of 1961 but it was then faced with a problem of not having the necessary funds for its operations.⁷⁵

Aside from political considerations, the bureaucratic separation of the three chief organs of the agrarian reform was found to lead to overlapping and to confusion and disputes over jurisdiction. There has been talk of placing all responsibility for the agrarian reform program under one single agency, but this has not been implemented and the prospects of such a move are not very bright. To add, in

⁷⁴ Iêda Siqueira Wiarda, "Leoni's First Year in Office: Gobierno de Amplia Base," Caribbean Monthly Bulletin, II (April, 1965), 5-6.

⁷⁵ Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, p. 186. As late as 1966 political rather than economic considerations seemed to be behind an effort by the Congress to limit BAP's functions.

only a few states has the governor undertaken to coordinate the agrarian reform program in his area. Finally, all these agencies have suffered from cuts in their budgets, cuts determined not only by a recession during the first half of the Betancourt administration but also by cuts made by the opposition in Congress especially since 1962. Just as serious has been the lack of trained personnel to man the reform, especially its extension service aspects. The slowness in providing final titles to the settled peasants and inadequate marketing facilities have proven to be other sources of frustration and friction within the agencies of agrarian reform.⁷⁶

Political Support

The difficulties in program implementation and program coordination are further complicated if one takes into consideration the question of political support for the type of program undertaken by the Acción Democrática administrations. Political rivalries and arguments between the members of the various political parties and even within AD itself have resulted in the slowness and sense of frustration that at times appear to characterize the agrarian reform program. Often at the state and at the local levels differences have erupted between members of parties that have formed the coalition at the national level. In the few places where the Communists and other opposition parties have some influence

⁷⁶U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, p. 370.

on the peasant movement, they have attempted to use their peasant followers to embarrass the government.

The extreme Left opposition parties, as well as URD during most of the Betancourt years, violently attacked the official program and sought to discredit it in the eyes of the peasants. They accused the government of purposely delaying land redistribution, of leaving the latifundia system intact, and of failing to provide sufficient credit or technical aid to the beneficiaries of the reform.

The opponents from the Right likewise have found grounds to denounce the government program. They have exaggerated the number of instances in which peasants have illegally seized land and have argued that they themselves had the constant threat of expropriation hanging over them thus making it impossible to press any improvement on their own properties. This in turn undermined, as occurred in the first few years of the Betancourt administration, the confidence of the business community in the country's future.

Inevitably, the agrarian reform operations have been affected by the turbulent political crosscurrents in Venezuela that plagued the Betancourt administration and that later strained the Leoni government. A fluid situation has been caused by the fashioning and refashioning of governmental coalitions--first with the departure of URD early in the Betancourt administration, then the MIR and the ARS splits within AD. Leoni had to work with URD and with Uslar Pietri, and later with URD and AD alone after the

departure of Uslar Pietri from his government; and the situation remains unstable. Once the original URD-AD-COPEI coalition broke down and the AD splits took place, the Betancourt and Leoni governments were faced with a minority in Congress with insufficient votes to appropriate the necessary funds for the agrarian reform operations. In fact, the opposition parties have found here a handy weapon to use against the AD-government. Debates have sought to foster the impression that the government has been both slow in pushing the reform forward and corrupt in going ahead with the projects already under way.⁷⁷ These charges have not been substantiated, but they nevertheless have damaged the government efforts at the same time that they have served as a convenient excuse for the opposition to refuse to appropriate the necessary funds for agrarian reform projects.

It is important to point out, however, that in spite of the opposition moves--at times successful--to frustrate AD-sponsored projects, the opposition has not openly been against the agrarian reform program per se. In fact, perhaps the most significant accomplishment of the AD-leadership efforts in this particular policy area has been the political support within and without the party for agrarian reform.

⁷⁷ Arturo Uslar Pietri, "El Dilema Nacional," El Nacional (November 13, 1966), p. A-4. This critical essay by Uslar Pietri appeared after he had abandoned the Leoni governmental coalition. See also "Deshabitadas 150 Viviendas Campesinas que Costaron dos Millones," El Nacional, (April 10, 1966), p. D-7.

Since 1958 no political party has dared oppose agrarian reform--the conflicts have existed on the form and the timing of various aspects of this reform as well as the manner in which to bring the campesino into the mainstream of modern Venezuela. This tremendous difference between the years in which the advocacy of agrarian reform was considered irrefutable proof of a party's "communistic" tendencies and the present when all parties support it and only vie with each other in offering plans to make it more effective in a shorter time, is a difference greatly to be credited to AD's forthright position in this regard as well as its relentless efforts in realizing and carrying out its program.

The agrarian reform law of 1960 was the result of painstaking studies undertaken by the Agrarian Reform Commission, composed of technicians as well as representatives of various socioeconomic and political sectors of Venezuela.⁷⁸ The bringing together of various shades of political opinion was further underlined at the time the Law was promulgated at the historical Carabobo Battleground. Among those leading the celebration were Betancourt and Leoni from Acción Democrática, Victor Giménez Landínez and Rafael Caldera from COPEI, and Jóvito Villalba, secretary general of URD.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Venezuela, Comisión de Reforma Agraria, Informes de las Subcomisiones (4 vols.; Caracas: Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, 1959).

⁷⁹ The full text of their speeches appeared in Instituto Agrario Nacional, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela, pp. 37-53.

Betancourt viewed the Law as a fulfillment of the political ideals of Bolívar, among them national independence, abolition of all forms of slavery, and democratization of the nation's wealth and resources. The latter ideal, he said, could become a reality only through the agrarian reform law. Giménez Landínez stressed the "integrating" character of the reform, a reform that would be attained through unified political effort. The same theme of unity as essential for the accomplishment of agrarian reform was echoed by Leóni and Caldera, who named it "the law of [political] unity." Villalba underlined the Venezuelan character of the attempted program. Caldera was to later link the "carta magna del campesino" with the papal encyclical Madre y Maestra,⁸⁰ while the president of the Federación Campesina de Venezuela was to call it "a national undertaking . . . not a charitable operation . . . to correct social injustices, but a patriotic, nationalistic and progressive program aimed at integrating Venezuela's economy into a cohesive and sound structure."⁸¹

This demonstration of political unity behind the agrarian reform law of 1960 was the result of Betancourt's early recognition that no agrarian reform law could be passed--much less implemented--unless it reflected the views of many

⁸⁰Quoted in Rafael Silva Guillen, La Reforma Agraria en Venezuela, p. 1.

⁸¹Armando González, Agrarian Reform as Seen by the Labor Movement in Agriculture, p. 14.

leading politicians of various parties as well as allayed the fears of the landholding elite that its property would be subject to outright expropriation. On the other hand, this moderation and gradualism on the part of Betancourt and later of Leoni, have made them targets for criticisms from the absolutists who claim that the only real land reform is instantaneous redistribution of all land. Among these extremists were those who insisted that the 1958 overthrow of Pérez Jiménez without immediate land reform had become a "revolution to no purpose" because no spectacular expropriation of latifundia was taking place.⁸²

The administrative difficulties, the obstructive maneuvers of the opposition, and the criticism of the agrarian reform program have stopped short of totally undermining the program itself. The program's resilience seems to be due to its gradualism and, above all, to the unwavering support given it by the Federación Campesina de Venezuela. Although not a part of the administrative machinery that implements the agrarian reform program and although it characterizes itself as a nonpartisan entity, the FCV has played a crucial role in the political support that has sustained the AD-sponsored program.⁸³

⁸²Dumont, Lands Alive, pp. 28-29; Paul H. Finch, "Señalan Fallas Reforma Agraria de Venezuela," Listín Diario [Santo Domingo, D.R.] (August 31, 1964), p. 1.

⁸³The best study of the FCV is Powell's Preliminary Report on the Federación Campesina de Venezuela. For the FCV's relations to the Venezuelan labor movement, see chap. VII.

In the 1958 elections, AD received a large rural vote in part because it was able to identify itself with the well-organized and widespread Federación Campesina. It is usually granted by adecos and the opposition alike that it was the strong rural vote and not the urban vote that was decisive in those elections. Thus, it was not surprising that the FCV was prominent in the drafting and in the implementation aspects of the Ley Agraria of 1960.⁸⁴

The law specified that two members of the 5-man IAN directorate should come from the FCV. Furthermore, beyond this direct influence on the policies of agrarian reform, FCV locally has a tremendous impact. Without the assistance and discipline of the FCV organization, this program could not have been put into effect with the relative order and absence of disruption of overall agricultural production which it enjoyed.⁸⁵ Thus, because it is often the only organized entity in the rural community, the local of the FCV is responsible for drawing up the petition for subdivision of individual plots. At other times members

⁸⁴ Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, Venezuela Election Factbook (Washington, D.C.: ICOPS, 1963). It should be noted that the rural vote seems to have been crucial even in the early elections held between 1945 and 1948. Betancourt claims that AD won these elections because of "massive rural support." Betancourt, Venezuela: Política y Petróleo, p. 355.

⁸⁵ A. Curtis Wilgus (ed.), The Caribbean: Venezuelan Development (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1963), pp. 203, 205, 217, 232-233.

of the FCV participate locally in convincing a recalcitrant landlord that he should sell his land. Often also, the FCV members are given the task of supervising the clearing of the land, the tractor work, technical assistance to agriculture, etc. In order to do all these things, the FCV is heavily subsidized by the government. It is not surprising, then, to see that the FCV has been of enormous political importance in the planning and executing of the agrarian reform program. Until now it has exerted a commendable influence and has been credited with much that has been accomplished in agrarian reform as well as in providing for political stability and government support in the campo.⁸⁶

FCV President Armando González feels that the FCV has channeled the campesino demands through the legally established agencies and, thus, it has strengthened these agencies at the same time that it has shown the campesino that he indeed has a voice in the solution of his own problems. The FCV has, for example, presented some 140,000 land petitions to the IAN, of which 70,000 had been answered positively by late 1964. The Federación has also actively participated in the programming, planning, and execution of the agrarian reform through its representatives in the IAN

⁸⁶Penn and Schuster, "La Reforma Agraria de Venezuela," p. 36; Lord, "The Peasantry as an Emerging Political Factor," p. 94. This topic will be further examined in chap. VII.

directorate, in the commissions for agrarian reform, in the MAC, and in the state and local levels. It has founded "escuelas de capacitación," of which four are already in operation. These schools are in charge of creating a core of peasant leaders who are thoroughly familiar with the agrarian reform program and who are able to use the peasant leagues as a means of access to the governmental machinery. The ultimate objective of the Federación is to become independent from government subsidies and to promote its own financial means through cooperatives, housing projects, and the like. It is felt that this independence will give the FGV further bargaining power with whatever political party happens to be in charge of the executive and of the agrarian reform program at any given time.⁸⁷

González and most campesino leaders, although recognizing the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the agrarian reform program, argue that the program is basically sound and that, given time, it will prove itself. This judgment on the part of campesino leaders appears correct. Thus, the Venezuelan farmer is earning 10 times more today than he did 22 years ago. Agricultural production, moreover, has increased 7% annually since the late 1950's, well ahead of Venezuela's 3.6% population growth. Expansion of agricultural production in the early

⁸⁷González, "Reforma Agraria y Superación Nacional," pp. 42-43; Armando González, "Los Campesinos y La Reforma Agraria," Política, VI (February, 1967), 5-12.

stages of agrarian reform is the exception rather than the rule. Venezuela's experience seems to be unique at least in the Latin-American context.⁸⁸

Land reform had placed 143,817 families on 3,685,150 hectares of their own land up to the end of 1967. By the end of 1968, which coincides with the end of the current four-year economic plan, it is expected that 157,000 families will have been settled, 57,000 more than originally programmed. At the end of 1967 there were about 750 farming settlements (asentamientos) in Venezuela where settlers worked their lands on a cooperative basis with the help of the IAN. To house them, IAN built 42,649 dwelling units under the current program on 301 settlements. By the end of 1968, 12,000 additional units are scheduled to rise on 152 settlements.⁸⁹

The significance of these figures is attested by many students of Venezuelan economics and politics. Alexander affirms that "although the Venezuelan agrarian reform has been beset with problems, its significance in the general pattern of the country's democratic revolution is unquestionably great."⁹⁰ He was not alone in this

⁸⁸ For comparison, see Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, passim.

⁸⁹ New York Times, January 22, 1968, p. 66.

⁹⁰ Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, p. 192.

conclusion.⁹¹ Various surveys have stressed that the land distribution program is already bringing about a long overdue improvement in the economic and social structure of the country. It is establishing a class of small landholders who will be able to put into production large parts of the nation's arable land never before used. These small landholders will in many cases have a money income for the first time, and will provide a growing market for the goods manufactured by new industries established as a result of industrial diversification, another phase of the Acción Democrática's governmental program. Available figures indicate that the agrarian reform has already brought a noticeable increase in the output of agricultural products.⁹²

Aside from these considerations, an indicator of the slow but steady progress of the agrarian reform program is the degree to which the parties that have led the government coalition have been able to keep the loyalty of the peasantry. Judged on this basis, the agrarian reform program

⁹¹ See, for example, Raúl Leoni, "View from Caracas," Foreign Affairs, XLIII (July, 1965), 644-645; Victor Alba, Alliance without Allies (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), pp. 92, 152, 164, 177-178; Claudio Veliz, "Obstáculos a la Reforma en América Latina," Foro Internacional [Mexico], IV (July 15, 1963), 379-396.

⁹² Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 183-184; Alejandro M. Osorio, "La Agricultura Venezolana en el Desarrollo Económico del País y la Reforma Agraria," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 35-48. Osorio has at various times been professor of agrarian law, supreme court justice, director of the BAP, and minister of the MAC. See also Política, VI (February, 1967), 86 that shows the growth both in the number of landowners and in agricultural production since the introduction of the agrarian reform program. The same issue carries an editorial, "Los Campesinos y la Reforma Agraria," pp. 5-12.

can be considered fairly successful. The overwhelming majority of the peasant unions throughout Venezuela have remained under the control of Acción Democrática, in spite of the MIR and later the ARS splits. The only states where AD did not control the majority of organized peasants were the Andean states of Mérida and Táchira, where local units of the FCV were led by COPEI elements--and COPEI was aligned with AD throughout the Betancourt government years and has played a "loyal opposition" role during the Leoni administration. When URD came into the coalition with Leoni, it brought its few ligas and sindicatos to the AD-dominated FCV.⁹³ The fact that in several instances the campesinos were at the forefront of the government's struggle to suppress the guerrillas seemed to be the clearest proof of all that the campesinos had faith in the government and felt that the agrarian reform, even if slowly implemented, did hold the promise of a better life for them and their children.

From all accounts, both AD presidents, Leoni and Betancourt, received the core of their political support from the campesinos, especially those who had been organized by the FCV or who had benefited in some measure from the AD-sponsored agrarian reform program. This becomes very clear if one looks at the states where the core of the AD vote in 1963 (though substantially reduced from its 1958

⁹³A more detailed examination of the FCV in the context of the Venezuelan labor movement appears in chap. VII.

landslide victory) was concentrated--in Lara, in Portuguesa, in Yaracuy, in Barinas, in Apure, in Guárico, in Anzoátegui, in Monagas, in Sucre states and in the Delta Amacuro territory--all considered "rural" areas.⁹⁴

Acción Democrática has won every free election since 1948 but its margin of victory has declined in each election. In 1958 AD had 49.8% of the vote; in 1963, 32.7%. In 1958 AD had a majority in only five of the ten largest cities; in 1963, it had a plurality in only five and won more than 30% of the vote in only two of these. Acción Democrática received only 13.6% of the vote in Caracas in 1963. The party won its plurality in the interior and specially in the solidly rural areas. About 55% of the total AD vote was compiled in the countryside and in towns of less than 5,000 inhabitants.⁹⁵ COPEI, the party with the second largest proportion of the vote, and a partner of the AD-governmental coalition during 1959-1963, achieved 31% of its vote in only three states, the largely agricultural Andean states of Mérida, Táchira, and

⁹⁴Alba, Alliance without Allies, pp. 92, 177-178; Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, passim; Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, Venezuela: Election Factbook, passim; Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pts. I, II, and III, passim.

⁹⁵This figure was arrived at by calculating the AD vote in municipalities so classified in the 1950 census; the results for the 1960 census for Venezuela as a whole are still in the process of being published. This may, however, understate the rural percentage since rural precincts near large towns have not been counted.

Trujillo. In short, the two top parties in Venezuela, because of the fragmentation of the urban vote among other smaller parties, are dependent for the bulk of their support on the rural voters. In order to maintain power one may say that AD must maintain campesino loyalties, while the other parties, unless they are able to present a solid front in the cities, will have to undercut AD strength in the rural areas. The consequence for the campesino is that the government, especially Acción Democrática, has a vested interest in moving him into the mainstream of rapidly modernizing Venezuela.

These conclusions are buttressed by the author's interviews with over 100 AD leaders and members of various socioeconomic backgrounds.⁹⁶ Thus, when asked what they thought of the agrarian reform and what they would like to see modified in it or added to it, the adecos questioned gave their overwhelming support to the program:

TABLE 9

AD MEMBERS VIS-À-VIS THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM

Approve	88% (44 members)
Disapprove	6% (3 members)
Don't Know	6% (3 members)

⁹⁶ The question asked "what do you think of the agrarian reform program?" See Appendix.

TABLE 10

AD LEADERS VIS-À-VIS THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM

Approve	93% (54 leaders)
Disapprove	5% (3 leaders)
Don't Know	2% (1 leader)

The modifications desired would not signify a complete overhauling of the program, only more of it in every aspect, except, perhaps, more personnel.⁹⁷ These were the modifications desired by those questioned:

TABLE 11

MODIFICATIONS DESIRED IN THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM

	AD Members	AD Leaders
More Credit	84% (42 members)	88% (51 leaders)
More Education	76% (38 members)	89% (52 leaders)
More Land	92% (46 members)	67% (49 leaders)
More Personnel	6% (3 members)	56% (33 leaders)
More Political Organizations (Ligas)	82% (41 members)	91% (53 leaders)
More Machinery (Tools, etc.)	78% (39 members)	72% (42 leaders)

⁹⁷The question asked "what would you like to see changed in the agrarian reform program?" See Appendix. Both members and leaders often gave a series of modifications they would like to see made, thus the noncumulative character of the percentage points in the table above. What these mean is, simply, for example, that while 92% or 46 of the members mentioned "more land," only 6% or 3 members mentioned "more personnel" among the desired modifications. Notice should also be made of the fact that "expropriation" per se did not appear as part of the "more land" type of response and the few times this cropped up openly in the interviews occurred in responses obtained in major cities such as Maracaibo and Caracas and in every instance the respondent was not a campesino.

Thus the priorities for change would seem to be: for members--land, credit, ligas, machinery, education, and personnel, in that order; for leaders--ligas, education, credit (these three clustered very closely together), machinery, land, and personnel, in that order.

One would seem justified in concluding from these responses that both AD leaders and members interviewed were fairly satisfied with the agrarian reform program in that they gave it such overwhelming support and only had suggestions for more of the same. The low priority given to personnel seemed to be part of an overall reaction against the bureaucracy, a negative reaction already found by a number of other observers of the Venezuelan society⁹⁸ and aptly stated by a former Minister of Agriculture and Livestock,

The unjustifiable in our agrarian reform . . . is that the IAN spends more than Bs 70 million annually in its administrative bureaucracy; that the BAP spends more than Bs 72 million for the same purpose; and that the MAC spends annually Bs 62 million, or almost 2/5 of its total budget, in personnel salaries for twice the number of employees it really needs. . . . All these are not only unjustifiable occurrences but also they are acts of treason, dialectically speaking, to the Agrarian Reform. In effect, economies in personnel could be made that . . . would result in an additional Bs 60 million becoming annually available for the settling of at least 15,000 more campesino families in a presidential term of office (five years).⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, *passim*.

⁹⁹ Osorio, "La Agricultura Venezolana," p. 46.

The perhaps surprising degree of approval of peasant leagues as a means to improve the agrarian reform program seemed to indicate that adecos trusted the FCV as a channel of communication between themselves and the government. In the course of the interviews it was often remarked by the respondents that it was in the liga meeting that they discussed their grievances and sought recourse from the government. It was also often the case that the local adeco leader was also the agent responsible for agrarian reform in that particular place.¹⁰⁰

From a detailed examination of the literature on the Venezuelan agrarian reform program (both AD-oriented and independent), there seems to be substantial basis for affirming that the program has indeed been successful in eliciting a high degree of support from various sectors of the Venezuelan society. In this sense, it has been an integrating element in that polity. The differences as to form, substance, and timing of the program have not wrenched apart sectors of the society, for example, the campesinos and the hacendados, or led to an extreme type of militancy among the campesinos themselves. There are indications, furthermore, that the Federación Campesina de Venezuela has played a moderating role by giving the campesino a sense of leverage, of power before the government because of his political militancy (and vote). The FCV has also served as a channel of communication between the campesino and the

¹⁰⁰ See chap. VII.

governmental agencies responsible for agrarian reform implementation. For their part, the AD governments of Betancourt and Leoni have been thoroughly aware of the crucial role played by the rural vote in their electoral victories. Their long interest in the agrarian question, both from an historical as well as from an economic point of view, has led these leaders to act with deep political insight in pushing for the implementation of a comprehensive agrarian reform program.

Economically and historically the campesinos have been the lowest men in Venezuela society, the most neglected by scores of governments, from the days of the Spanish regime until very recent decades. In the popular literature, the campesino has always been depicted as the Juan Bimba (John Nothing) par excellence--used and abused by the caudillos and in perpetual, if somewhat bewildered misery.¹⁰¹ Yet, in spite of the exploitation they have been subject to, the campesinos appear today to be still hopeful about the agrarian reform program and they seem still trustful that the government, at long last, is indeed taking an interest in

¹⁰¹ A very popular poet tells how
 "Juan Bimba had twenty horses,
 the Revolution took ten;
 to pursue them,
 the government took the other ten;
 and when no more remained,
 they took Juan Bimba."

Andrés Eloy Blanco, "Juan Bimba," in Sus Mejores Poemas (Caracas: Ediciones Populares Venezolanas, n.d.).

their fate.¹⁰²

By tackling the agrarian problem in a comprehensive manner and yet avoiding a breach among various groups of Venezuelan society, by evoking political support as well as by providing channels of communication between campesino and gobierno through its implementing agencies, the AD-sponsored agrarian reform can fully justify the label of an integrating program.

From the more purely economic viewpoint, the AD agrarian reform has been of revolutionary importance. Production has never failed to rise, and reform has created no economic dislocations. On the contrary, the agrarian reform program has been integrated smoothly with the traditional agricultural system. The rapidly diversifying system of agriculture is becoming a principal source of raw materials for domestic industry and has already cut perceptibly into imports of these products. Growth has been such that Venezuela is today among the very few nations of the world whose agriculture is expanding at twice the rate of its population--and the only one in Latin America.

For the Venezuelan campesino, active participation in the peasant leagues has made him one of the most politically active elements in society and one of the most effective in exerting a positive pressure on the government.

¹⁰²J. R. Mathiason, "The Venezuelan Campesino: Perspectives on Change," in Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, pp. 197-254.

In this context, it is not surprising that the campesinos, who have objectively the smallest stake in the national system economically (they still earn the lowest income of any of major occupational groups in the country) are attitudinally its greatest supporters and that they can be seen as the balancing element helping maintain the Venezuelan political system. It is as though the campesinos were beginning to feel that they had a stake in the system, because that system was beginning to give them concrete benefits. This involvement of the campesinos in the political and economic life of Venezuela parallels a similar involvement on the part of their urban counterparts, the obreros and trabajadores.

CHAPTER VII

LABOR IN POLITICS

ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA AND THE VENEZUELAN LABOR MOVEMENT

Organized labor, both rural and urban, was the first pressure group to develop in a century and a half of Venezuelan independent history capable of challenging--sometimes successfully--the role of the armed forces as the sole arbiter of politics. Under capable leadership, notably from Acción Democrática, the trade unions demonstrated in 1945 and again in 1958 that they could play a key role in the overthrowing and in the selecting of governments. Since 1958 they have become the mainstay of two popularly elected presidents; their support has been at times crucial and is always considered essential by the presidents themselves. The power of organized labor is almost without parallel in other Latin-American countries and it is a very recent development within Venezuela itself.¹

The political power of the trade unions has meant that their members have--directly and indirectly--gained

¹Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America, pp. 3-24, 142-152; Serafino Romualdi, "Labor and Democracy in Latin America," Foreign Affairs, XXV (April, 1947), 477-489; "Discurso del Presidente de la República, Dr. Raúl Leoni, en el V Congreso de Trabajadores," Política, IV (February-March, 1965), 9-18.

access to the government. They, like other sectors of the Venezuelan society such as the military and the Catholic hierarchy, have played a role in policy-making and policy-implementation. In this fashion, the Venezuelan trade unions have become participants in the socio-political system of which they are a part and, like that system, have been undergoing--as well as contributing to--a series of changes attendant upon the modernization process that is taking place in Venezuela. In this chapter we look at the origins of the Venezuelan labor movement, its involvement in the politics of the country, and the role AD has played in making this labor movement a prime factor in the whole integrating and modernization process.

Origins of the Venezuelan Labor Movement

The labor movement did not achieve the present degree of political importance overnight or without challenge, and Venezuela itself was a late-comer in having anything that could be labeled a trade union. With an almost exclusively agricultural economy until well into the twentieth century, the organization of labor was further curtailed by the long and restrictive Gómez dictatorship (1908-1935). In Venezuela, as in most Latin-American countries, attempts to organize labor were met with ruthless suppression. Gómez associated labor unions with Communism; their very existence, he maintained, would engender anarchy and lead to the inevitable overthrow of the

government.² The governments of López Contreras (1936-1940) and Medina Angarita (1941-1945) were far less restrictive than the Gómez administration.³ The political elite was broadened somewhat, persecution of opposition elements was relatively mild but the control of the political power remained in few hands. While the years 1936-1945 formed a transitional period during which middle sector opposition groups were sporadically permitted to organize,⁴ labor--both rural and urban--was kept effectively at the margin of the political process by constitutional restrictions. Thus, the President of the country was chosen indirectly by the national Congress, which in turn was chosen by state legislators and municipal councilmen voted for by an electorate restricted by the 1936 Constitution to literate males 21 years of age or more.⁵ It was not until after 1945, the Venezuelan executive now in the hands of Acción Democrática, that a new constitution enfranchised the vast majority of working-class Venezuelans.⁶

²Lavin, A Hale for Gómez, p. 426.

³López Contreras, El Triunfo de la Verdad, *passim*; Allen, Venezuela, A Democracy, *passim*; Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia, *passim*.

⁴See *supra*, chaps. III and IV.

⁵John D. Martz, "Acción Democrática: The Evolution of a Modern Political Party" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Political Science, University of North Carolina, 1963), p. 49; Venezuela, Ley de Censo Electoral y de Elecciones (Caracas: Edición Oficial, Imprenta Nacional, 1936).

⁶Venezuela, Constitución de 5 Julio de 1947 (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1947).

Even though unenfranchised for so long, labor has from its inception been involved in politics in Venezuela just as in the rest of Latin America. It was modeled on the European pattern in which ideological considerations were of paramount importance. Not even today has it come close to the traditional North American "business unionism" principle of confining its activities to securing economic benefits through collective bargaining with a minimum of involvement in party politics.⁷

European labor influences first appeared in Latin America in the early mutual benefit societies and semi-political organizations of anarchists and socialists during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In both types of organizations, European immigrants and Latin Americans familiar with Europe were prominent as founders and leaders, but this early phase of unionism bypassed Venezuela for all practical purposes and appeared, instead, only in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, and Peru. Though dominated by anarchosyndicalists, these incipient labor organizations were also heavily influenced by the socialist followers of Marx.⁸

⁷Needler, Latin American Politics in Perspective, pp. 51-56; Antonio Penichet Gómez, "El Movimiento Obrero en Cincuenta Años," America, XLI (December, 1963), 48-56; Charles A. Page, "Labor's Political Role in Latin America," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXVIII (Autumn, 1952), 481-494. For an excellent theoretical study see Bruce H. Millen, "The Political Setting and the Union," chap. III of his The Political Role of Labor in Developing Countries (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1963).

⁸Alexander, Latin American Politics and Government, pp. 97-99.

The long reign of Gómez, who permitted no political organization to challenge his absolute authority, insured that Venezuela would receive only a minimal impact of the ferment of the Mexican and later the Russian Revolution, both of which carried with them messages of high significance to rural and urban populations everywhere. But even Gómez was powerless to completely shut Venezuela off from the currents of change; and Venezuela, like the rest of Latin America, was stirred by the new ideas. The discovery of petroleum and its exploitation in ever greater measure from the 1920's on further insured that Gómez' manorial society could no longer continue to exist wholly at the margin of world events. In this period, the anarchosyndicalists lost their dominance and the socialists and trade unionists came to control the incipient Latin-American labor movement.⁹ Communist parties sprouted in several countries. Rómulo Betancourt, an exile from Gómez' repressions, was active in the organization of such a party in Costa Rica in 1930; and his own country saw the emergence of a Communist Party in 1931.

Both Communists and trade unionists, however, showed little grasp of the social, political, and economic realities of Latin America in general and of Venezuela in particular. By overstressing vague "anti-imperialist" feelings and the

⁹ Francisco Pérez Leirós, El Movimiento Sindical en América Latina (Buenos Aires: La Vanguardia, 1941), passim.

class struggle, they were hampered in their organizational efforts. Their acceptance, further, of a doctrine of revolution in which the working class alone was to play a revolutionary role¹⁰ made them oblivious to the fact that even in the more advanced Latin-American countries, the industrial workers were far outnumbered by peasants and landless laborers, among whom hardly any organization ever existed--much less a "class" consciousness.

The crucial question in Venezuela, as in all Latin America, was inevitably the land question--and this was a question which most of the socialists were singularly unable to handle to their advantage. They worked on the basis of a theory which assigned to the industrial proletariat the sole leadership of revolutionary forces, and were prepared to accord the peasants only a subordinate place under this leadership. Mostly urban, often European educated if not European born, they were all too apt not only to ignore the peasant but also to despise him and to regard him as a potential reactionary whenever his lot improved a little. Thus, in theory and in practice, these socialists were unable to adapt themselves to the realities of Latin America and contributed practically nothing to the embryonic labor movement in Venezuela.

¹⁰ Alexander Lozovsky, El Movimiento Sindical Latino Americano - Sus Virtudes y Sus Defectos (Montevideo: Confederación Sindical Latino Americana "C.S.L.A.," 1928); Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America, pp. 244-246.

The outstanding exception to this rule and one which represented a real attempt to devise a specifically Latin-American conception of socialism applicable to the prevailing conditions was that of the Aprista (from APRA, Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana) movement founded in Mexico in 1924 by the Peruvian exile Victor Haya de la Torre. Instead of a movement under exclusively proletarian leadership, Haya called for a common front of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and the middle sectors against the landed aristocracy and its allies, the foreign capitalists and their native supporters. He further rejected the separate nationalisms of the various Latin-American countries, and favored common action on a continental scale in Indo-America (as he liked to call the American continent), including public ownership of land and the development of a continental system of social security.¹¹ In its methods of organization, Haya's group had much in common with the Communists--it underlined the need for a strong and disciplined party under centralized direction and control; and in Peru, and later in the APRA-influenced PDN in Venezuela, the aprista organización de base was a cell or unit with small membership and secret meetings. But in this respect the apristas were again following the dictates of necessity; no open political organization was allowed to emerge or to long

¹¹Haya de la Torre has written extensively. For the best summary and analysis of the APRA, see Harry Kantor, The Ideology and Program of the Peruvian Aprista Movement (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1953).

survive in the Peru or in the Venezuela of the time. Aprista ideas, however, were to have a considerable impact in Venezuela, chiefly through the exiles--later Acción Democrática leaders.¹²

Since the APRA avowed to be a multiclass organization, an alliance of workers, peasants, middle class, and indigenous owners of capital, against the landed aristocracy and foreign capitalism and imperialism, it set out to improve labor relations between native obrerros and native patrones and thus came into conflict with the other militant trade union groups, especially those led by the Communists. In spite of all difficulties, however, in Peru APRA managed to become a mass movement, with cells and groups in the towns as well as in the countryside, with a considerable following among Indians, whom it managed to reach on a scale previously unknown. It also won a substantial following in Paraguay, Cuba, and Venezuela. In the latter country, the PDN and its successor, the AD, were often labeled "partido apristas."¹³

It should be stressed, however, that in spite of Aprista-oriented underground leaders, the labor movement

¹² See *supra*, chaps. III and V; Kantor, "The Development of Acción Democrática of Venezuela," pp. 237-251.

¹³ Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, Vol. IV, Pt. II: *Communism and Social Democracy, 1914-1931*, pp. 750-773; Vol. V: *Socialism and Fascism, 1931-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 218-219.

in Venezuela was firmly kept in an embryonic stage by the forceful repression of Gómez. In his hands and those of his family and favorites, was a large proportion of the nation's best lands. Soldiers were often used as laborers in his haciendas, while officers served as their foremen. The oil workers, the only laborers who could be called a truly proletarian group, were few in number and were effectively atomized, isolated, and kept unorganized. There was also a huge surplus of unskilled laborers--the rural peasants who were only too willing to exchange their miserable lot for that of the comparably well-paid workers--and the fact that they were readily expendable further retarded the growth of a strong labor organization.

Ruthless toward any opposition, Gómez made certain that no trade union movement would be organized independently from his control. Perhaps to enhance his own standing abroad as an "enlightened" dictator, Gómez allowed the creation of the Federación Obrera de Venezuela (FOV) in the late 1920's and pressed for its affiliation with the International Labour Organization (ILO). But even this official labor federation achieved no significant importance and its claim of 25,000 members seems grossly exaggerated.¹⁴ The "Confederation of Workers and Artisans of the Federal District," typical of

¹⁴ Moisés Poblete Troncoso and Ben G. Burnett, The Rise of the Latin American Labor Movement (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), p. 94; P. B. Pérez Salinas, "El Momento Obrero en Acción Democrática," A.D. (September 13, 1961), p. 15.

workers' "unions" of the Gómez years, was in reality purely a social organization whose president was a loyal Gomecista. Twice during the Gómez regime articles appeared in the press advocating unionization of workers, and in both instances the author was thrown in the dreaded prison La Rotunda.¹⁵

On July 23, 1928, Venezuela's first labor law was enacted. Accident compensation and death benefits were specified; maximum work hours were set at nine, but no minimum wage was set. Petroleum workers had to be eighteen years old. According to the law, labor disputes could voluntarily be submitted for arbitration to state governors from whose decisions a final appeal could be made to the Minister of Interior Relations. Workers were allowed to set up unions, the law stated, but might not affiliate with foreign organizations. Fines were levied for spreading Communist propaganda.¹⁶ Another law decreed the construction by the government of housing projects to alleviate the housing problems of workers, but no action was ever taken to put that law into effect. The labor code itself became a dead letter when the government provided no enforcement machinery. Venezuela had no unionist tradition, and Gómez discouraged it.

Not to be blamed on the dictatorship was the labor leaders' failure to create any effective links between urban workers and the peasants. The few labor leaders interested--

¹⁵Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, p. 144.

¹⁶Gaceta Oficial, July 23, 1928.

and brave enough--in organizing the workers were usually overly concerned with theory and ideology and, coming from the cities, showed little inclination to try the much harder task of arousing the illiterate, scattered, and poverty-stricken peasantry.

Development of the Venezuelan Labor Movement

Before the death of President Gómez in December, 1935, the development of labor had been seriously restricted by the dictator's tight control over all aspects of national affairs. Events of the period are rather obscure, partly because the newspapers were seldom allowed to publish more than social events and apologies to the perennial dictator. It is thus difficult to ascertain the activities of the Venezuelan Labor Federation (FOV), the government-sponsored organization; it is even more difficult to speculate concerning the activities of organizations not sanctioned by Gómez.¹⁷ Indications are, however, that organized labor membership and influence were minimal.

Gómez' death ushered in a new era, and the incipient Venezuelan labor movement had its first chance to emerge from underground. Workers in the mutual benefit societies, oil workers, and returning exiles brought home the ideas of

¹⁷ Pocaterra, in his Gómez, The Shame of America, p. xxi makes an appeal to the "Workingmen's Federation," but there is no further attempt by the author to clarify what constituted this Federation or who were its members.

political action groups and began to think in terms of organizing themselves into one major labor federation.¹⁸

At first their efforts were aided by López Contreras' more relaxed handling of the presidential powers, and by the freer atmosphere he allowed all Venezuelans. In 1936 a new and exceptionally liberal labor code was promulgated. Reflecting the most advanced modern thought, it forbade child labor, regulated working conditions for women, provided for an eight-hour day and a forty-eight-hour week, housing and medical attention, arbitration of labor disputes, and the establishment of minimum wages, profit sharing, and the right of labor to organize.¹⁹ This progressive and advanced labor code carried a key restrictive clause, however. In the words of Lavin,

To protect itself against "certain elements (radicals and Communists) who abuse the privilege of democracy," the López administration incorporated into the Labor Law a handy provision: unions were allowed to establish industrial and commercial schools, libraries and clubs, but the Labor Law specifically barred them from engaging in political activities and empowered the government to dissolve any union so engaged.²⁰

¹⁸Valmore Rodríguez, who later distinguished himself as an adeco leader, helped found the first independent union of petroleum workers in Cabimas, in February, 1936. For this and other episodes of the early phase of the Venezuelan labor movement, see Jesús Prieto Soto, El Chorro: Gracia o Maldición (Madrid: Industrias Gráficas España, 1960).

¹⁹Allen, Venezuela, A Democracy, pp. 235-343. Lieuwen contends that "ostensibly the law applied to all Venezuelan labor; actually it was pointedly framed for the petroleum worker, for an elite of 25,000--for less than 2% of the working population." Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela, p. 81. Lieuwen might have added that the employers affected were also an "elite," and a very special one at that, since they were almost exclusively the foreign owners and operators of the oil industry.

²⁰Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, p. 427.

At the start of the López Contreras administration, the stress appeared to be on liberalization and enforcement of the positive side of the labor code. The government, furthermore, showed a favorable attitude towards labor and recognition of its problems through the institution of numerous public works projects designed in part to alleviate unemployment.

Soon after the passage of the 1936 law, there was a rapid organization of workers, especially among the Maracaibo Basin petroleum workers. Unions were formed at each of the principal oil camps, labor organizers established ties among the locals, and the first labor congress was held in Caracas. More than 200 delegates, claiming to represent 150,000 workers, examined the status of the Venezuelan labor movement and of the new social legislation, but they failed in their major aim--the establishment of a permanent, unified labor confederation.²¹

The weakness of the incipient labor movement became more apparent when agitation and strikes in the oil fields provoked López Contreras to put an end to the liberalization measures of the previous year. In December, 1936, when union leaders failed to get satisfaction from the oil companies on various demands, a general strike was called. To the amazement of both government and industry, 20,000

²¹Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, pp. 37-38; Poblete Troncoso and Burnett, The Rise of the Latin American Labor Movement, pp. 94-95.

workers left their jobs.²² Production dropped and this, in turn, caused a serious drop in the royalties the government received from the oil exploration. At this point, President López Contreras invoked the restrictive clause in the labor code and accused the unions of engaging in illegal political activities.²³ Scores of young political and labor leaders were imprisoned or exiled. All anti-López political parties were suppressed; the government was the only political force openly allowed on the scene.²⁴ A labor conference scheduled for 1938 was banned. Nevertheless, a measure of central organization was achieved through the secret establishment of a national committee on labor organizations.

Meanwhile, two political tendencies gained dominance within the growing Venezuelan proletariat. At this point the largest and most important strain was oriented toward the Partido Comunista de Venezuela, a member of the Communist International and particularly effective in gathering support from the oil field workers. The other tendency leaned toward

²² Ahora [Caracas], December 14, 1936, p. 1.

²³ Prieto Soto, El Chorro: Gracia o Maldición, p. 6. The government's viewpoint towards the strikes was expressed in Crítica, December 14, 1936, pp. 3-9. See also Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela, pp. 81-83.

²⁴ Betancourt, though ordered into exile, managed to hide from the police for several months. Living in the underground, Betancourt continued his efforts towards the eventual organization of a political party. It is to López Contreras' credit--and another proof of his relative moderation--that Betancourt's "Economy and Finance" column, which friends mailed to the Caracas daily Ahora, continued to appear regularly.

the Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN), led by Betancourt, a party of the Democratic Left.

The PDN, though proclaiming itself a multiclass organization, was deeply interested in the Venezuelan obreros and campesinos. It devoted a large portion of its program to an analysis of their problems and the finding of possible solutions. It called for the implementation and the expansion of the benefits proclaimed in López Contreras' Labor Code and for the establishment of a comprehensive social security system. It stressed the need for better sanitary conditions and education for the working class and it favored collective bargaining between labor unions and management.²⁵

Moving from theory to practice, the PDN leaders began to challenge the Communist organizers and took the initiative--hitherto unknown in Venezuelan history--in approaching the peasants and in encouraging them to form action groups to obtain less harsh treatment from the hacendados. Their task was made easier when the presidency passed on to Isaias Medina Angarita. Though a Tachirensé like Gómez and López Contreras, General Medina was one of the most liberal presidents Venezuela ever had. He allowed opposition parties to function freely, gave women the vote, and respected freedom of speech and press. His administration passed the first social security and income tax laws and

²⁵ Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 9-51.

charted an ambitious land reform redistribution program.²⁶

The PDN was allowed to emerge from the underground and to become a full-fledged legal party in 1941, under the name of Acción Democrática. Unions were also allowed a great degree of freedom and their numbers grew considerably; collective bargaining was more often employed than violence. The Communists continued to lose ground in their organizational efforts partly due to their rigid ideology, which was not suitable to Venezuelan conditions, and partly due to the aggressive tactics of the shrewd, flexible, and dedicated adecos. Both Communists and adecos maintained relations with the Workers' Confederation of Latin America (Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina, CTAL, led by the Mexican Vicente Lombardo Toledano), an inter-American organization affiliated with the Communist-leaning World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). At a 1944 CTAL conference, Rodolfo Quintero for the Communists and Mallavé Villalba for AD agreed to unite their efforts. Subsequently both groups cooperated in the establishment of the Federation of Venezuelan Workers (FTV), with its headquarters in Caracas.

The Communist-AD collaboration, however, did not last long. When the Communists refused to grant equal representation to both groups on the executive committee of the FTV, the adecos withdrew. In a surprising move, President Medina

²⁶ Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia, passim; Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, pp. 251-253; Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 207-213.

Angarita sided with the adecos and took away legal recognition from those unions whose delegates remained in the FTV congress after the AD-faction's departure. No one has ever been able to explain the President's decision, especially because he had been most criticized by the adecos while the Communists had often cooperated with him. In another ironic twist, the AD leadership in turn condemned Medina Angarita for this action. Raúl Leoni was so critical as to assert that the President had arbitrarily threatened, by this move, to destroy the work of several years of union organization.²⁷

Whatever his motives, Medina Angarita failed to gain any one labor group's support for his move; and this dissatisfaction with the President was another factor in his 1945 overthrow by a group of military officers and AD leaders. The coup and the events which followed it further confused the labor picture. AD, from its early stages--as the Organización Venezolana (ORVE) and later the PDN--had clearly espoused the cause of the working class and had advocated the right to strike, the need to bargain collectively, and the benefits to be gained from organizing without the government's paternalistic--and restrictive--protection. Once in power, however, Betancourt, a long-time adeco and now provisional President, suspended the right to strike, outlawed the

²⁷ A.D. (April 1, 1944), p. 1. It is likely that AD feared the official blessing might destroy the independence of the unions and eventually signify their complete domination by the government. This had happened in the case of the incipient labor movement of the neighboring Dominican Republic under Trujillo.

lockout, and imposed a system of compulsory arbitration. Yet, in spite of these sanctions, the labor faction led by Malavé Villalba gave full support to the new government.

Under the Betancourt-Gallegos administrations, which lasted for 30 months until November, 1948, organized labor, regardless of decreed sanctions and controls, in practice flourished as never before in the country's history. Acción Democrática, with government backing, gained a dominant position in the majority of the unions. AD endeavored to make the party the spearhead of every union. It aimed to build up a large, disciplined body of supporters who would thwart any attempt to put it out of power. Huge AD-sponsored mass meetings were held to familiarize the workers with the government's program. Workers, especially when it seemed as though the government were being threatened, spontaneously paraded through the streets in order to advertise their allegiance to AD and to the AD government. In turn, the government often arbitrated between labor and management and usually granted the majority of labor's claims.²⁸

The creation of a Ministry of Labor under AD veteran Raúl Leoni further cemented the bonds between the unions and the government. Since the Ministry was empowered to recognize unions legally, AD, through Leoni, found itself in an enviable position to decide which unions would be allowed government

²⁸Marsland and Marsland, Venezuela Through its History, pp. 256-257.

backing and often also subsidies. The number of legally recognized unions more than quadrupled. A large number of agricultural unions were organized and recognized, a unique event in Venezuelan history. In less than one year after the overthrow of Medina, 264 syndicates with close to 15,000 campesino members were registered in 1947 and 1948.²⁹ AD leaders and organizers fanned into the remotest parts of the Venezuelan campo in order to form, with the government's blessings, new peasant leagues and syndicates. Their activity was so aggressive and so successful, in fact, that it provoked a wave of unfounded rumors by the opposition. Chief among these rumors were that adecos were inciting the peasants to seize lands--which occurred occasionally--and arming the peasantry to undermine the regular armed forces--an unfounded affirmation.³⁰

There was little doubt that the government in the trienio put pressure on employers to grant wage increases and to facilitate unionization of the employees. With the

²⁹ Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela, pp. 100-105. Robert J. Alexander, Imperial Prophets of the Revolution (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 127, mentions that by the middle of 1948, there were some 100 agricultural workers' unions and that the total number of union members rose to 125,000. The International Labour Office, Freedom of Association and Conditions of Work in Venezuela (Geneva: ILO, 1950), pp. 104-105, quotes figures supplied to its Mission by the Venezuelan Ministry of Labor in 1949 which indicate that by 1948 agricultural trade unions numbered 515, with a membership of 43,302, although it observes that union sources claimed that total trade union membership was more than double this figure.

³⁰ Vallenilla Lanz, Escrito de Memoria, pp. 116-136.

labor minister's support and with the help of a dedicated number of organizers, among them Malavé Villalba and Ramón Quijada, AD gradually built up regional and occupational federations which culminated in the formation of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV) in 1947. The phenomenal growth of labor unions during the AD trienio is clearly illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 12
LEGALLY OPERATING LABOR UNIONS AND MEMBERSHIP^a

Date	Total Unions	Members
18 Oct. '45	215	24,366
31 Dec. '45	248	48,789
31 Dec. '46	763	99,525
31 Dec. '47	934	109,592
31 Dec. '48	1,040 (est.)	137,310 (est.)

^aSource: Venezuela, Ministério de Trabajo, Memorias (Caracas: Ministério de Trabajo, 1946, 1947, 1948). Note that there is evidence that many labor unions were operating before the 1945 coup but had not been legally recognized by the government--thus, in a short time after the 1945 coup, the number of unions more than doubled and the membership encompassed more than tripled. Approximately half of all unions were made up of peasants.

The Communists, for their part, were divided among themselves. The Blacks, led by Rodolfo Quintero, openly opposed the AD government and the AD-dominated CTV. They established their own Federation of Workers of the Federal District, which contained a small minority of the unions in the Caracas area.³¹ The Reds, led by Juan Bautista Fuenmayor,

³¹Alexander, Communism in Latin America, pp. 257-260.

worked within the CTV and its affiliated unions, but relations between Communists and noncommunists were strained. The uneasy alliance came to an open break in 1948 when the Communist oil workers broke away from the Federation of Petroleum Workers (FEDEPETROL) over a dispute about the renewal of a contract.³²

The Communists accused AD of controlling the CTV for its own ends. Employers became more vocal in their criticism as well and asserted that the CTV's strength in the labor movement was sufficient to provoke unchecked abuse of union privileges. There were claims that the Confederation dictated collective agreements in which demands exceeded the possibilities of the economy to satisfy them. It was further alleged that leaders of independent (i.e., non-CTV) unions were jailed and their followers discriminated against in obtaining jobs.³³

Whatever the truth of these accusations, the fact remained that during the AD trienio the labor movement in Venezuela was accorded a position of power, a chance to participate in the drafting of labor laws, a position in which it could present itself before the employers knowing its demands would be supported by the government. The CTV gave strong support to the government and the government,

³²U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, p. 415.

³³Luzardo, Notas Histórico-Económicas, pp. 135-165.

for its part, championed the cause of the workers and assisted the CTV in its organizational efforts. The close relationship between the government and the labor movement meant that they mutually supported each other--labor in receiving special consideration from the government, the government in having the loyalty of a labor sector ready to go on strike whenever a coup seemed imminent.³⁴ This show of support from labor apparently averted the possibility that the various crises could culminate in the overthrow of the AD government. On the other hand, the intimate relation between the CTV and AD came with a heavy price. Whatever abuses were committed by the CTV, they were always blamed directly on the AD government. The government, for its part, was too busy trying to survive the daily crises to give as much attention to labor as many in the CTV felt labor deserved. The open favoritism of the government towards all unions dominated by AD alienated those unions which were independent or Communist-led and they too joined the growing group of those who wished to overthrow Rómulo Gallegos, the popularly elected chief executive.

The final crisis took place when military elements presented an ultimatum to the President for drastic revisions in his government's personnel and policies and Gallegos refused to call upon the workers to go out on a general strike to show support for his rule. Refusing to accept the

³⁴Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela, p. 105; El País (February 11, 1948), p. 8; El País (July 11, 1948), p. 3.

ultimatum or to call upon labor to back his stand, Gallegos ensured his own downfall. When some unions, particularly in the oil fields, did finally strike, their effort, coming after the presidential ouster by the military, was too late.³⁵

Once in power, the military Junta justified its action by accusing AD of attempting to set up a state within a state through the establishment of a politically oriented labor movement. Recognizing the power of organized labor, however, the Junta stated its intention of continuing a program of social progress and gave assurances that labor gains during the trienio would remain intact. The liberal Labor Code of 1947 was declared in force, but even this failed to allay labor's fears.

Most of labor viewed the military coup of November 24, 1948, as a fatal blow to the position of privilege and power the unions had enjoyed under the provisional government of Betancourt and later under the popularly-elected Gallegos. Labor's offer of support for Gallegos in his final hours was certain to provoke further enmity from the new rulers of the country. Finally, in the Junta's own words, the Venezuelan labor movement would henceforth be "apolitical."³⁶

³⁵Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 22-36. There are others who feel that even if labor had struck before the coup, it had no practical possibility of averting a military take-over. See John D. Martz, "The Growth and Democratization of the Venezuelan Labor Movement," Inter-American Economic Affairs, XVII (Autumn, 1963), 9.

³⁶Tarnóí, El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela, pp. 263-270. By Pérez Jiménez' own account, only four strikes took place between 1949 and 1952 (ibid., p. 266).

Labor's fears of reprisals came to be fully justified. As the labor union movement had been principally the work of AD labor leaders, the new regime moved to check its influence. One of the Junta's first moves was to outlaw Acción Democrática. Basing its actions on a clause of the 1947 Labor Code which prohibited political involvement by labor, the Junta arrested and exiled many labor leaders and froze the funds and removed the assets of their unions. The strikes which occurred in the oil fields in Zulia in support for the overthrown Gallegos were quickly crushed and more arrests followed. When the CTV reacted against the Junta and the important typographical union in Caracas staged a strike which spread to other areas of the country, the government countered by dissolving the CTV and its affiliated federations. The labor movement was thus reduced to a fragmented collection of unassociated unions which could be easily controlled or crushed by the military Junta.³⁷

Although the existence of the individual unions was not affected, all members of the executive committees in office before the CTV dissolution were ordered deposed from their positions. A government circular called for the election of new executive committees. Unions were compelled to obtain prior authorization for their meetings which were

³⁷ Ricardo Temoche Benites, Los Sindicatos y la Amenaza Totalitaria (Mexico: ORIT, 1955); Serafino Romualdi, "Venezuela Crushes Labor," American Federationist, LIX (February, 1952), 23-24, 30; Page, "Labor's Political Role in Latin America," p. 484.

restricted to discussing certain approved "nonpolitical" topics, and which were open to government officials.

The CTV leaders who escaped imprisonment were sent into exile. With the aid of various international labor groups, they set up a CTV-in-exile which became a founding member of the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores, ORIT).³⁸ Raúl Leoni, former Minister of Labor and a founding member of AD, was very active in ORIT and the CTV-in-exile, and in this capacity he travelled extensively in Latin America and made contacts that would later be valuable to AD and his own administration.

Meanwhile, in Venezuela, the labor movement continued to suffer further restrictions on its activities. The government allowed the supervised reorganization of most unions in urban centers; but the peasant unions, with their scattered and smaller membership, their greater vulnerability to local suppression, and their limited financial means, found it almost impossible to meet the operating requirements imposed by the dictatorship's labor inspectors.³⁹ AD, the Red Communists, COPEI and URD all maintained informal and

³⁸International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores, The Permanent Struggle of the Free Trade Union Movement against Latin American Dictatorships (Mexico: ICFTU-ORIT Special Publications, June, 1960); Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers of the ICFTU, El Movimiento Democrático Internacional contra la Dictadura Venezolana (Mexico, 1955).

³⁹Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America, pp. 142-147.

underground labor groups under their control, but these groups were easier to maintain in the large cities than in the campo.

On the other hand, the same factors which made the rural labor movement a more vulnerable target for the suppression of overt, legal union activities made it a more difficult target for the suppression of clandestine political resistance to the dictatorship. The local campesino leaders managed to escape the government's vigilance by living in remote areas peopled by a peasantry ready to defend them because they had received land and beneficial treatment during the AD trienio.⁴⁰

The Black Communists were allowed to carry on their activities without governmental interference or difficulties. The Communist-dominated Federation of Workers of the Federal District was granted legal recognition by Pérez Jiménez. With headquarters in Caracas and in Anzoátegui state, its leaders enjoyed freedom of movement throughout the country. This group was led by Rodolfo Quintero who, in 1954, became an official of the Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina (CTAL), a Communist-oriented organization based in Mexico.⁴¹

⁴⁰ González, Agrarian Reform as Seen by the Labor Movement in Agriculture, pp. 5-6.

⁴¹ Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina, Qué es la C.T.A.L.? (Mexico City: Universidad Obrera, 1944); Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina, Resoluciones de sus Asambleas, 1938-1948 (Mexico City: C.T.A.L., 1948); Rodolfo Quintero, "Los Sindicatos en Venezuela," Tiempos Nuevos [Moscow], XXII (December 16, 1964), 24-26.

In the absence of experienced leadership and the power of large centralized organizations and cut off from government subsidies, the conduct of union activities, such as bargaining and recruitment, was severely impaired. An International Labor Organization (ILO) mission sent in 1949 was highly critical of the labor situation.⁴²

The 1949 ILO mission report was one of the many pressures that prompted Pérez Jiménez to seek a better international image by posing as a friend of labor. A labor federation was created in 1952 not only to show the critics that labor was "free" in Venezuela but also to serve as the dictator's channel to the workers who, in spite of harassment, continued loyal to Acción Democrática. The government labor federation, the Movimiento Sindical de Trabajadores (MOSIT) was given a luxurious headquarters, Trade Union House, in Caracas and in the interior of the country similar luxurious buildings appeared. Pérez Jiménez' favorites and Black Communists staffed MOSIT. In 1954 MOSIT became the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores (CNT) presided over by Communist leader Quintero for a time.⁴³ The pattern of military-Communist cooperation which had existed at other times in Venezuelan history thus emerged again in the

⁴²International Labour Office, Freedom of Association and Conditions of Work in Venezuela, *passim*.

⁴³U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, p. 416.

government-controlled labor federation. The CNT became an affiliate of the Agrupación de Trabajadores Latino Americanos sponsored by Argentine military strongman Juan Perón.

But Pérez Jiménez' efforts to court Venezuelan labor and to compensate for the ILO condemnation by affiliating his CNT with a Latin-American organization were futile. The only Venezuelan workers who responded to the dictator's appeals were the few who were aligned with the Black Communists of Quintero. The Red Communists, led by Machado, whether motivated by tactical purposes or by a real distrust of the dictator, joined the AD labor elements in the underground efforts to overthrow Pérez Jiménez.⁴⁴ Their efforts were aided by the alienation of other members of the Venezuelan society--members of the aristocracy who had little taste for the dictator's debauchery, businessmen and industrialists who began to feel the decline in the oil market after the 1956 Suez Canal crisis was over, the Catholic Church which could no longer remain silent before the cruelty of the secret police,⁴⁵ and finally military officers who also viewed

⁴⁴Partido Comunista Venezolano, La Actuación de los Partidos (Caracas, 1952); Charles A. Page, "Communism in the Labor Movements of Latin America," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXI (Summer, 1955), 373-382; Ben Burnett, "Communist Strategy in the Latin American Labor Movement," Social Science, XXXV (Spring, 1960), 105-113.

⁴⁵Mecham, Church and State in Latin America, p. 110. It is interesting to note that Archbishop Rafael Arias of Caracas, in his pastoral letter of May 1, 1957, supported labor's right to freely organize and to share in the country's riches. See Hispanic American Report, X (July, 1957), 309.

with alarm the growing power exercised by the secret police.⁴⁶

In the events which preceded and followed the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez on January 23, 1958, labor played a key role. A labor committee was formed and it contacted the Junta Patriótica, a united front of the four largest political parties set up to overthrow the dictatorship. This labor committee called an effective general strike which acted as a catalyst in arousing the people and further encouraging those already opposed to the regime.

The strike committee, once Pérez Jiménez was overthrown, was reorganized as the National Unified Labor Committee (Comité Sindical Unificado Nacional, CSUN). Its purpose was now to restructure the labor movement with the aid of labor leaders who were returning from exile, were freed from jail, or could now emerge from the underground. Party lines were disregarded and for a short interval the Venezuelan labor movement included all shades of ideologies. Within a year the CSUN gave way to a reactivated CTV. The Third CTV Congress claimed to represent 685 industrial and commercial unions and 1,250 peasant leagues. The total membership was said to encompass over a million workers. Of the 1,065 delegates to the November, 1959, Congress, the AD represented the largest group. AD claimed 561 delegates, the Communists 210, the COPEI 152, and URD, 142. The CTV executive committee was made up of three Communists, two each

⁴⁶Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 37-50.

from COPEI and URD, six adecos, and one unaffiliated.⁴⁷
 This multiparty coalition in the CTV paralleled the attempt among the various political parties which had been instrumental in the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez to forget their differences and to work together for the survival of constitutional government.⁴⁸

Thus, from 1936 to 1959, the Venezuelan labor movement had completed a full circle--it had emerged in the days when Communist and socialist elements had collaborated in the formation of a labor federation, it had leaned toward the democratic Left represented by AD in the days of the trienio, and it had again encompassed a number of variously inclined members and leaders who conspired to bring about the overthrow of dictatorship. This last goal accomplished, the unity of the labor movement was to be tested, as it had been in the AD trienio, by the personal ambitions of its leaders and by the ideological inclinations of those in charge of giving the movement a political orientation.

⁴⁷Information about the Congress, its delegates, and the speeches made is found in José González Navarro, Discursos de la CTV (Caracas: Litografía Barcelona, 1960), and Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela, Recopilación de Informes, Acuerdos, Resoluciones y Recomendaciones; III Congreso de Trabajadores de Venezuela (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1960). See also Martz, "The Growth and Democratization of the Venezuelan Labor Movement," pp. 8, 11. The Peasants' Federation, FCV, incorporated into the CTV as one of its industrial federations. It claimed over 743,000 campesinos organized into 3,124 syndicates. This figure is disputed by Powell, Preliminary Report on the Federación Campesina de Venezuela, p. 13, who thinks 457,000 campesino members is a more accurate assessment. Nevertheless, the FCV probably does represent about one-half of the total CTV membership; see Lord, "The Peasantry as an Emerging Political Factor," pp. 76-77.

⁴⁸Acción Democrática, Pacto Suscrito el 31 de Octubre de 1958, passim.

Political Aspects

In spite of legal provisions which prohibit the association of unions with political parties,⁴⁹ the maintenance of open but informal alliances among these organizations has been characteristic of the Venezuelan labor movement since the first significant activity began in 1936. In fact, distinctions among the various factions within the trade union movement are most easily made on a political basis. Alignment has been determined by the inclinations of labor leaders who, as persons of influence within a highly politically conscious society,⁵⁰ have inevitably become politically involved. In a very real sense, then, the Venezuelan labor movement is "in politics," no matter what the labor code sanctions or what the labor federation⁵¹ and the political party statutes have to say on the matter.

Typically, the top leaders of the CTV are also members of the AD labor bureau, which by virtue of the

⁴⁹ Venezuela, Ministerio del Trabajo, Ley del Trabajo (Caracas: Ministerio del Trabajo, 1959). Curiously enough, party literature also stresses the need for independence of labor from partisan alignments; Acción Democrática, Doctrina y Programa, especially pp. 137-140. This has been the position taken by the CTV President; José González Navarro, Discursos del Presidente de la Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (Caracas: Publicaciones de la CTV, 1961), pp. 6-8.

⁵⁰ This quality of Venezuelan society is a major conclusion of a massive recent study. Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, *passim*.

⁵¹ Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela, Estatutos (Caracas: Publicaciones de la CTV, 1962).

party's dominance is the real locus of power in the labor movement. Significantly, the labor bureau has also been a major center within the party. By no coincidence, reportedly against President Betancourt's personal wishes, the AD candidate in the 1963 presidential elections, Raúl Leoni, had been Minister of Labor in the trienio and was a long-standing labor leader. Further, the intimate relations between the CTV, the AD, and the AD-dominated governmental coalitions have had far-reaching implications for all three--at times overlapping--entities. Some illustrations will clarify the type of implications that might result as well as underline the highly political character of Venezuelan labor.

The Question of International Affiliation

The 1959 Labor Congress which reestablished the CTV was faced with the issue of affiliation with an international labor organization. AD had a majority in the Congress; but in keeping with the political unity program then prevalent, the AD did not have a comparable majority in the CTV executive committee where the Communists, the social-Christians, and URD were represented completely out of proportion to their real strength in the Congress itself. Many adecos had worked closely with ORIT during their exile and would have liked to see the CTV align itself with that inter-American labor organization. For other adecos, especially those who had acquired a more leftist orientation during the underground struggle, affiliation with ORIT

would unnecessarily identify the CTV with United States trade unionism. The Communists wished an association with the CTAL, the affiliate of the Communist-dominated WFTU. A compromise was reached in the decision to explore the possibilities of establishing a new regional labor organization oriented toward the Left; and after the 1959 Congress, the CTV for this purpose proposed a meeting of the ORIT, the CTAL, and the Latin American Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (Confederacion Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Cristianos, CLASC), a member of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, IFCTU). The CTV suggestion was supported by the CTAL but rejected by both CLASC and ORIT. The CTV, however, continued to pursue the matter and in 1960 approached the Cuban Labor Federation on the possibility of forming a new labor alignment in Latin America. The exchange of views on this subject did not produce any definitive results because the CTV--like the AD itself--was becoming more and more disenchanted with the Cuban Revolution. As Venezuela and Cuba neared an open break, the CTV's talks with the Cuban Federation ended in 1961.⁵² In the summer of 1962, with the leftist and pro-Castro elements within CTV already expelled, the CTV formally affiliated with ORIT. The CTV President José González Navarro explained the

⁵² Apparently the CTV and the CTC (the Cuban Workers' Federation) did conclude a "pact of mutual assistance"; see Documentos (April-June, 1961), pp. 554-555. For whatever it was worth, this pact was abrogated by the IV Congress of the CTV in December of 1961; see Documentos (October-December, 1961), p. 768.

affiliation with ORIT because this organization, like the CTV, was "a purely working-class organization . . . without any political obligations."⁵³

The Question of Political Party Affiliation

During the first three years after the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez, the labor movement played a crucial role in helping the AD government withstand constant threats by ambitious military men often supported by both the Venezuela extreme Right--those who wished a return to their days of privilege and favors before the government--and the extreme Left--those who desired a radical and immediate transformation of the whole Venezuelan social structure. This curious alliance of the extreme Left and of the extreme Right had occurred at other times in the country's history and reappeared now among those dissatisfied with the AD electoral victory and the reformist policies of President Betancourt. The coup attempt by General Castro León in April of 1960 and the bloody uprisings at Carúpano and Puerto Cabello drew support from both the extreme Left and the extreme Right, and all failed in large measure due to the firm support given the constitutional government by labor.⁵⁴ Castro León's coup,

⁵³José González Navarro, "La CTV Está en los Mas Altos Niveles de la Vida Nacional y Internacional," Política, IV (February-March, 1965), 19-44; the quotation is on page 43. Earlier in the article González Navarro explains that the CTV is not apolitical because it does participate in all the activities of the Venezuelan society--including the political--but it is not partisan because it does not affiliate with any single political party (ibid., pp. 20-21).

⁵⁴A. A. Berle, "Venezuela: The Achievement of Don Rómulo," The Reporter, XXIX (November 7, 1963), 33-34.

for example, was countered by a general strike that helped show the popularity of the Betancourt government and became a total failure when the general was apprehended by mobilized campesinos.⁵⁵ At the time of a barracks revolt at Barcelona in June, 1961, campesinos from surrounding states were mobilized by their leagues, converged on Barcelona, and set up road blocks to contain and suppress the revolt.⁵⁶

The crucial labor support for the Betancourt government is explained by a student of Venezuela politics in these words:

Betancourt based much of his administration's support on two previously disenfranchised groups, the laborers and the peasants. During his administration . . . , the labor force was organized, protected, and controlled by the AD party, and the majority of the unions were oriented towards the Betancourt administration. Betancourt succeeded in giving power to these groups by closely linking their organization to the party, which was virtually synonymous with the government. He also sought to keep these groups firmly behind him by promoting agricultural reform for the peasants and by promoting wage increases and better working conditions for the laborers.⁵⁷

Less publicized, but perhaps just as crucial were the battles fought and won by AD for the control of the CTV. Early in 1960, a dissident group from AD, led by long time adeco Domingo Rangel, formed their own party, the Movimiento

⁵⁵Gonzalo Barrios, Los Días y la Política (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1963), pp. 17-23, 64-67, 289-291; Hispanic American Report, XIII (June, 1960), 251-252.

⁵⁶Iord, "The Peasantry as an Emerging Political Factor," p. 82.

⁵⁷Shelp, "Latin American Leadership in Transition: Legitimacy vs. Personalismo," p. 32.

de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR). It is possible that the brilliant but erratic Rangel desired to follow a leftist but independent line, but the MIR gradually joined the PCV in violent opposition to President Betancourt.⁵⁸

In November, 1960, both the PCV and the MIR led the serious riots that took place in Caracas and other major cities. They called for a general strike and for the overthrow of the constitutional government, but in neither case did they receive any significant backing from the vast majority of Venezuelans. In fact, their acts of terrorism prompted a joint communiqué by labor and management groups, a unique event in Venezuelan history.⁵⁹ Further, the PCV and the MIR actions resulted in the AD and COPEI members of the CTV deciding to discipline their leftist colleagues by suspending them from the CTV executive committee.

This was followed by a concerted effort throughout the country to win control of the local unions. Rival slates of candidates were presented by AD and COPEI on the one hand, and by the MIR, the PCV, and the URD (now also in opposition to Betancourt) on the other. Betancourt used all his skills as a politician and threw the weight of government support behind the AD-COPEI candidates; and although the union

⁵⁸"El MIR: Cuatro Años de Historia," Momento [Caracas], XXXVI (August 23, 1964), 39-42; Boersner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," pp. 73-96.

⁵⁹The communiqué was jointly signed by FEDECAMARAS, Asociación Pro-Venezuela, and the CTV. Documentos (April-June, 1961), p. 721.

elections were free and honest, the government-favored slates won a smashing victory and gained control of approximately 85% of the local unions and all the national federations, except one.⁶⁰

When the CTV Congress met in late 1961, the defeated urredistas, miristas, and comunistas did not attend and were removed from the leadership of the CTV.⁶¹ The local unions followed suit by removing those elements from posts of any importance; the unions controlled by the opposition retaliated by purging adecos and copeyanos. Since these opposition unions were few in number, small in membership, and now outside the CTV, they were effectively cut off from exerting any significant pressure on the government. They were further weakened by the fact that they were no longer eligible to receive the usual government subsidy and, perhaps more important for the individual union member, they could no longer count on the government's support in placing their demands before the employers.

The government's victory in the CTV becomes more impressive yet if one takes into consideration that at the same time that AD-COPEI were reasserting their dominance over the labor movement, they were also managing to show a similar

⁶⁰ Hispanic American Report, XIV (February, 1962), 1106.

⁶¹ José González Navarro, Ante el IV Congreso de Trabajadores de Venezuela (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1962); "Comunicado del Buró Sindical de AD," Documentos (October-December, 1961), pp. 575-579.

position of strength within the most important of the CTV affiliates, the Federación Campesina de Venezuela (FCV). When it became apparent that the moderates within the CTV, under the determined leadership of the Federation's president, José González Navarro, were prepared to isolate the labor extremists, the FCV president, Ramón Quijada, decided not to participate in the CTV Congress.

Quijada's personality and impatience with the gradualistic approach to agrarian reform had increasingly led him to clash with AD and break CTV-FCV discipline. He decided to join in the ARS split, confident that the campesinos would follow him. He apparently also felt that the estimated half million rural votes for Betancourt in 1958 were actually his.⁶² As it turned out, Quijada far overestimated his own strength and underestimated Betancourt's political skills. Further, Quijada was no match for the pressure of the AD organization during the first half of 1962. Thus Quijada's demagogic, personalistic leadership, which had been so important in welding together the campesino movement and reviving it again in 1958, gave way to younger and more orderly and sophisticated leadership.

The moderates within CTV, taking advantage of Quijada's absence in their Congress, moved to replace him with Armando González as the agricultural secretary on the executive committee of the CTV. Going further, AD and COPEI

⁶² Enrique Rodríguez, "El 'Affaire' Quijada," Momento, XXIII (October 8, 1961), 26-28; Martz, "Acción Democrática," pp. 399, 404, 406.

delegates mustered enough support in the CTV Congress's plenary session to declare the FCV intervened and ordered it reorganized under Armando González' leadership. When the FCV had its own congress, barely six months later, the González forces were clearly predominant. Here again a number of factors were involved, not the least of which was Betancourt's personal campaign throughout the campo in favor of those committed to the González group.⁶³

In a last-ditch effort to bolster their cause, the oppositionists in the labor movement joined in the creation of their own federation, the CTV-no-Gubernamental. In 1963, in the Fourth Congress of the Working People in Caracas, all unions identified with the so-called National Liberation Front of Venezuela (members of the MIR and of the Communist Party) as well as with the ARS and the URD established a new labor federation, the Central Unica de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CUTV). Rodolfo Quintero claimed that the CUTV included over 400 unions, about one-eighth of the legally recognized labor organizations then existing in the country, representing 240,000 members vs. the 450,000 members represented by the CTV.⁶⁴ Quintero's figures are

⁶³Powell, Preliminary Report on the Federación Campesina de Venezuela, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁴Rodolfo Quintero, "Los Sindicatos de Venezuela," Tiempos Nuevos [Moscow], XXII (December 16, 1964), 24-26. Quintero blamed labor's split on the "bourgeois policies" of Betancourt and the influence of ORIT's Serafino Romualdi.

probably inflated, but the CUTV unions were indeed strong among white-collar workers, especially in Caracas, and in some oil and iron industries.⁶⁵

With the inauguration of President Leoni in 1964, the political alignment in the Venezuelan trade unions became more complex still. COPEI chose not to participate in the Leoni government. Jóvito Villalba, el líder máximo of URD, made a complete break with his former close associate Miquilena who had become too involved with extreme leftists. The URD entered the governmental coalition and URD-controlled trade unions left CUTV and rejoined the CTV. Villalba's support of Leoni, however, did not go unchallenged within his own party and there were reports that the URD heir-apparent Ugarte Pelayo would have preferred to keep the party outside of the governmental coalition. With Ugarte Pelayo's death in 1966, the position of Villalba seemed to have been strengthened for a time. On the other hand, indications were that COPEI and AD, although no longer partners in government, were continuing their amicable collaboration within the labor movement. González Navarro, the CTV president, praised the social Christian labor leaders in his speech before the Fifth CTV Congress and envisaged continued cooperation between AD and COPEI within the labor federation.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, p. 422.

⁶⁶ González Navarro, "La CTV Está en los más Altos Niveles de la Vida Nacional y Internacional," pp. 19-20, 43-44.

For how long this cooperation would remain in effect was an open question. COPEI's desire to form an oppositionist front in order to obtain the presidency in the 1968 elections and its growing criticism of Leoni⁶⁷ was likely to be reflected in strained relations between copeyanos and adecos within the CTV.

These relations between AD and COPEI in the labor movement are further complicated because some Catholic workers also have their own organizations outside the CTV. Thus, until the formation of the CUTV, the most important labor organization unaffiliated with the CTV was the Committee of Autonomous Unions (Comité de Sindicatos Autónomos, CODESA), an independent organization of a little over 20,000 workers. CODESA, which started as the Labor Circle of Caracas in 1945, did not become a full fledged labor organization until 1958. Only after 1961 did it constitute a labor confederation for, with the exception of Táchira where a state federation had been formed, member unions were directly associated on a national basis. Many in CODESA simultaneously belong to the CTV for the effective assistance the large confederation can render in strictly labor-related matters such as collective bargaining and social legislation because of the ties between the CTV and the government in power.

⁶⁷Rodolfo José Cárdenas, "El Terrorismo en el Cuadro Político Venezolano," El Nacional (December 18, 1966), p. A-4. This COPEI leader closed his article predicting an electoral victory by a united opposition led by COPEI over a "gray, incompetent, agnostic, and adeca AD." Adeca is here used in a pejorative sense, meaning that "AD is communist."

The COPEI party, in turn, has its own labor section, the Workers' Front (Frente de Trabajadores Copeyanos, FTC). The FTC, organized in 1948, has worked within the CTV but recently it has also established closer relations with CODESA. The two Catholic organizations have remained separate and distinct, however. CODESA has called itself "apolitical" while the FTC is expressly an organ of COPEI. The two groups have more recently striven to work together, especially in the area of leadership training for labor leaders, under the sponsorship of the Unified Committee of Christian Trade Unions (CUSIC). The FTC is affiliated, on an international level, with the CLASC, the inter-American confederation of Social Christian trade unions, and the IFCTU, the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions.⁶⁸

The small differences that divide the Catholic workers and the far more pronounced differences that divide the rest of the Venezuelan labor movement all underline the fact that labor is very much "in politics" in that country. There is no doubt, for example, despite laws and regulations to the contrary, that deep bonds exist between the labor unions and the various political parties. In this context, it is easy to comprehend why the unity of the Venezuelan labor movement lasted for only a very short time after the 1958 reemergence of the CTV under the sponsorship

⁶⁸ Anna-Stina Ericson, Labor Law and Practice in Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Department of Labor, 1962), pp. 20-21.

of labor leaders from a full range of political parties. In fact, it seems to have lasted only long enough to insure the survival of the fledgling constitutional government. Once this constitutional government had allowed the free interplay of politics by all parties, the divergencies came to the surface again, divisions deepened, and labor movement unity was shattered beyond repair.

The unity was shattered by a number of factors. Ideological differences seem to have been predominant in the question of international affiliation and in the cases of the MIR of Domingo Rangel⁶⁹ and in the creation of the CUTV. Policy differences seem to have been the crucial factor in Quijada's abandonment of the CTV; personal ambitions were probably the key in the case of Ramos Giménez's ARS split. During the Betancourt administration, COPEI and AD elements had managed to gain control of the CTV, to lead it to affiliation with ORIT, and in general to

⁶⁹The growing leftism of Rangel is well illustrated in two publications; see Domingo Alberto Rangel, Una Teoría para la Revolución Democrática (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1958), and Domingo Alberto Rangel, Venezuela: País Ocupado (Caracas: Pensamiento Vivo, 1960). Ironically, perhaps, some five years later, Rangel was being accused by the Venezuelan leftists as having become too moderate; see James D. Cockcroft and Eduardo Vicente, "Venezuela and the FALN Since Leoni," Monthly Review, XVII (November, 1965), 29-40. By late 1967 the MIR seemed to have been irreparably split on this "moderation" or "nonviolence" issue. The speculation was that the moderate elements in the MIR wished to run in the 1968 elections and that as long as the MIR remained devoted to a policy of violence it would not be permitted a legal status as a party. See El Caribe [Santo Domingo, D.R.] (January 1, 1968), p. 12.

steer it toward a moderate course of government support. Under Leoni URD elements had been brought back to the CTV, but whether COPEI would continue playing a collaborative role within that federation was an open question as the 1968 electoral contest grew near. Involved in this case was not so much partisan differences as the high stakes existing between control of the government executive and control of the Venezuelan labor movement.

The Question of the Government Role in the Labor Movement

While Venezuelan labor law recognizes the right of persons to organize industrial or craft unions or associations, it also requires that all unions to be recognized as such must receive legal authorization from the Ministry of Labor.⁷⁰ Whether in the hands of Pérez Jiménez or of Betancourt and Leoni, this requirement gives the President, through his Minister of Labor, the power of life and death over labor organizations in the country. He can--and does--favor certain partisan alignments in unions and this favoritism is reflected in the number and nature of unions that are legally allowed to operate. With obvious satisfaction, President Leoni revealed in 1965 that the pro-government CTV, in spite of the splits since 1959, then controlled over 90% of the Venezuelan unions legally recognized.⁷¹

⁷⁰Ericson, Labor Law and Practice in Venezuela, pp. 12-19.

⁷¹"Discurso del Presidente de la República Dr. Raúl Leoni en el V Congreso de Trabajadores," p. 9.

Along with the recognition power goes the president's ability to subsidize those unions he favors. Union finances come from member dues, government subsidies, and from political parties. Figures are seldom given, but the financial part played by the government and by the parties is not denied and it is usually taken for granted.⁷²

More openly exercised is the government's role in collective bargaining. The right to bargain collectively is recognized in the Constitution,⁷³ and is regulated by the Labor Code. Well aware of the AD government's pro-labor stance, employers have shown great responsiveness to union demands. Although initially it was feared that labor, seeing itself as long-suffering under the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, would make exorbitant demands, that fear has not been realized.⁷⁴ Labor has tempered its demands because of

⁷²In 1961, for example, the Labor Ministry budget provided Bs 1,252,000 (\$373,731) for the FCV and Bs 360,000 (\$107,462) for the CTV, which according to the report of the CTV's Fourth Congress, represented 90% of its funds for that year. In addition, a number of unions maintain their headquarters free of charge in Union House (Casa Sindical) in Caracas, built by the Pérez Jiménez government and subsequently administered by the AD governments. Similar casas sindicales are found in many other cities. U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, p. 420. Other governmental help comes in the form of free use of official presses for the publication of union literature, etc.

⁷³Pan American Union, Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, 1961, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁴Mauro Barrenechea, "Unionism in Venezuela," America, CVII (August 13, 1962), 626; Carlos M. Lander, "El Progreso del Trabajador Venezolano," El Farol [Caracas], XXIV (April-June, 1964), 12-16.

political considerations and seems to have understood that the government cannot afford the embarrassment of social and economic crises engendered by prolonged labor-management litigations or by showing too much favoritism toward labor at the expense of management. The 1948 experience is still fresh, especially among the labor movement leadership. Augusto Malavé Villalba, the CTV secretary general, is candid enough to openly admit that too much pressure from labor on the constitutional government may result, as it did in 1948, in the overthrow of that government and the subsequent loss of privileges from which the Venezuelan labor movement has so greatly benefited.⁷⁵

This awareness on the part of the CTV leadership has the important implication that few labor disputes have resulted in strikes. As the Ministry of Labor participates directly in the procedures which must precede a call to strike, subsequently acting largely as an umpire in labor-management disputes, compliance with the law is carefully followed. Before a strike may be held, the means of conciliation must be exhausted; and throughout these proceedings representatives of the unions, of management, and of government take part. All matters not handled by these methods are

⁷⁵Interview with Augusto Malavé Villalba, CTV secretary general, Caracas, April 6, 1964. It is interesting to notice that in his speech before the Fifth CTV Congress, Malavé Villalba stressed the fundamental link in the labor movement's task to defend its own interests as a class and its needs to defend the democratic institutions (i.e., the AD governments); Augusto Malavé Villalba, "Extraordinario Fortalecimiento de la CTV en Esta Etapa Sindical," Política, IV (February-March, 1965), 45-56.

taken to the labor courts, the judges of which are appointed by the President. On occasion, the government has employed its prerogative of ending a strike by executive decree if it endangers the national health or social and economic welfare.

In view of the close relations among AD, the CTV, and the governments of Betancourt and Leoni, a strike is not so much averted by the complexities of the Labor Code or by the President's prerogatives as by the fact that labor has means other than the strike to obtain its demands. The most important means at the disposal of the labor movement is its direct involvement in politics.

Party leaders estimate that at least 50% of the total AD vote in 1958 came from the labor movement and they credit the labor vote with giving Leoni first his nomination for the presidency and subsequently his 1963 presidential victory. Their estimate is reinforced when one realizes that the two major labor organizations, the CTV and the FCV comprise over 1,400,000 members--and the total 1963 electorate numbered slightly over 3 million.⁷⁶

There is little doubt that labor, Acción Democrática, and the governments of Betancourt and Leoni have mutually supported each other. When 52 adecos were interviewed (25 labor members and 27 labor leaders) by the author,⁷⁷ they

⁷⁶ Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, Venezuela Elections Factbook, passim; Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pts. I, II, and III, passim.

⁷⁷ In the "labor" category were included 11 campesino leaders and 12 campesino leaders. The balance (14 members

were questioned about what were their party preferences. Their responses indicated these preferences:

TABLE 13
PARTY PREFERENCE BY LABOR

	AD		COPEI		URD		MIR		Others
Members	72%	(18):	12%	(3):	8%	(2):	4%	(1):	4% (1)
Leaders	74.07%	(20):	11.1%	(3):	11.1%	(3):	___	:	3.7% (1)

These same adecos, when asked where they had their first contact with AD replied that, in most cases, it had been at their union meetings.

TABLE 14
UNION AS ENTRÉE TO AD MEMBERSHIP

Labor Leaders	85.5%	(23 leaders)
Labor Members	84%	(21 members)

Finally, these adecos were asked about their voting record in 1963:

and 15 leaders) came closer to the U.S. concept of "labor" (i.e., they were bricklayers, oil workers, etc.). We arrived at "party preference" by asking the respondents, in specific instances, "which other party would have done better than AD?" We arrived at "union as entrée to AD membership" by asking the respondents what had been their first contact with AD. Finally, we asked the respondents about their voting record to arrive at the way they voted in the 1963 elections. See Appendix.

TABLE 15

VOTED FOR AD IN 1963 ELECTIONS

Labor Leaders	88.8% (24 leaders)
Labor Members	80% (20 members)

In their responses, those interviewed often mixed up AD, the CTV, and the AD-dominated governments as the agency which had provided them benefits or services or the agency through which they could obtain redress of their grievances.⁷⁸ This confusion may be understandable if one keeps in mind that throughout Venezuela, the local party chieftain may also be the local government official (the mayor, the agrarian reform agent, for example) and the local CTV or FCV leader. It is not unusual for these leaders to wear the party hat for one day, the labor or peasant hat the following. The interdependence of these structures enables the AD leadership to better mobilize and secure its followers--as well as to serve as a channel for local demands and government fulfillment of these demands.

In view of these responses and interactions, the surprising thing is that the AD, the CTV, and the Presidents

⁷⁸ See Appendix. It was also noted that many times respondents mentioned "la época de la democracia" either meaning the governments after Pérez Jiménez or the times in which AD had the government executive; likewise, "democracia" at times was the equivalent of the English "democracy," at other times it was used as a label for AD. Compare this observation with those of Powell, Preliminary Report on the Federación Campesina de Venezuela, passim; and Lerner, "Conflict and Consensus in Guayana," in Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, pp. 479-512.

Betancourt and Leoni consider themselves independent of each other; that though each supports the others, they are not formally bound to each other; that each has its own tasks and domains and roles to perform and to fulfill. While the actual independence of these several organizations may be questioned, the fact remains that since 1958 they have all managed to support and reinforce each other and yet maintain their separate entities and separate existences. It has thus been possible--and effective--for AD to continue to express its cherished claim that it is a multiclass party, that it is the party for all Venezuelans, and that the CTV is a workingman's and not just a partisan organization.

This perception by organized labor of its own independence, in spite of its obvious involvement in politics as a means to improve its position, is more easily understood if seen in the nature of the context in which labor has developed in Venezuela. As the central government, in paternalistic fashion, has been able to define labor's position through the promulgation and enforcement or lack of enforcement of legislation, labor has found it necessary to develop political influence in order to give its demands greater force.

Initially, in the days of Generals López Contreras and Medina Angarita, favorable legislation was the result of official generosity rather than labor pressure because at the time only a few, weak unions existed. Later, when labor

expanded and increased its strength largely through the concerted organizational efforts of Acción Democrática, it offered a valuable source of political collaboration in the overthrow of Medina Angarita. The ensuing AD governmental trienio was characterized by expanded benefits for labor as well as the rapid organization of new unions throughout the country. But these benefits and this organizational drive were undertaken, perhaps, at too fast a pace for the Venezuelan society of the time. The proletariat had certainly grown since the 1920's, but two decades later it was still in its infancy especially as far as political sophistication--and the need for moderation--were concerned. The business, landowning-extractive industries elite was still more than a match for labor; and when this elite obtained the concurrence of the military, the days of the AD pro-labor government were counted.

The decade of dictatorship was marked by a curtailment of labor's legally allowed activities but, at the same time, by a continuing underground effort to recruit labor in the offensive against Pérez Jiménez. This period witnessed the blurring of ideological party lines; and at the time of the dictator's overthrow, the Venezuelan labor movement experienced a brief interval of unity. When attempts were made for a return to a military dominated government, it was labor which showed the strongest support for the government, and which, through clearly political strikes, helped it survive these crises. Labor had begun to play an

effective role as a countervailing balance to the military.

But the survival and the strengthening of constitutional government, with the possibility for the free interplay of political groups, led to open divergencies among the parties and their labor branches. The intensified--at times violent--opposition to the AD-dominated governments led to a closer working arrangement between that party and the largest labor confederation in the country. Since then, the labor majority has shown loyalty to Acción Democrática; while the chief executives, jefes supremos of that party, have repaid labor by helping it satisfy its demands upon management.

In this new democratic phase, the gains obtained from government have no longer been a question of "generosity"--as they were in the days of López Contreras and Medina Angarita--but reflected the government's deep awareness of labor's role in the interplay of political forces in Venezuela. Labor, for its part, has used its new strength moderately, fully realizing that the experience of constitutional government in Venezuela is still a tenuous one and that its own power is more than matched by the power of other sectors of the society, such as the military. Thus, in Venezuela, labor is fully "in politics"--but the political realm is, by no means, its private domain. The realization of its involvement in politics has given labor an awareness of its power, its chance to play a crucial role in a mutually responsive relationship between gobierno

and obrero. By the same token, labor's realization of its political limitations has served as a moderative factor in this relationship. Only by realizing both its strength and its weakness has labor, especially within the CTV, served as an integrative factor in a rapidly changing Venezuelan society. The AD-governments' response to labor--in the form of welfare legislation--has reflected a realization of these strengths and weaknesses.

CHAPTER VIII

RESOURCE UTILIZATION AND WELFARE IMPROVEMENT UNDER ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA GOVERNMENTS

One of the secrets of Acción Democrática's success in staying in power for almost two consecutive constitutional terms--a unique event in the country's history--has been its ability to help pass legislation and to undertake projects that are beneficial to many sectors of the Venezuelan society.¹ Thus, while AD and the labor and the peasant sectors are closely associated, the party leadership in the government has pushed for programs that are beneficial not only to these two sectors but to others as well.

A major tenet of the AD program has always been the need to utilize the country's immense physical resources for the improvement of the welfare of all Venezuelans.² In so doing, the AD Presidents Betancourt and Leoni have been able to retain the loyalty of various groups; to help many;

¹This is one of the major conclusions of several students of Venezuelan politics. See, for example, Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, passim; Philip B. Taylor, Jr., "Democracy for Venezuela?" Current History, LI (November, 1966), 284-290, 310; Fred D. Levy, Jr., Economic Planning in Venezuela (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), passim.

²Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, passim.

and yet avoid alienating, at any one time, too many of the traditional forces such as the hacendados and the military or the newer breed, the industrialists. In fact, whether by chance or by design, the AD programs have so far divided rather than united the opposition. Its industrial diversification program, for example, has effectively gained the approval and the backing of many in the business sector, while its oil policies have not aroused a concerted attack from the moneyed classes. The same can be said of its programs of agrarian reform, education, and even foreign policy. In every instance there has been a great deal of compromise between the ideals of the party program and the realities faced by the chief executive. The need to compromise has fallen short of fatally splitting the party, although splits have taken place over revolutionary and reformist principles.

Thus, one may attempt to look at AD's programs in resource utilization and in welfare improvement as integrating factors since they benefited adecos and non-adecos and helped avoid a complete polarization between those who favor the programs and those who oppose them. In this sense, AD is living up to its claim of being a multiclass party. At the same time, by attempting to even out the income levels throughout the country, AD can indeed proclaim that it is giving special attention to the traditionally neglected campesinos and trabajadores. Finally, many of these programs are likely to have a profound impact upon the Venezuelan

social structure, to make it less rigid, more modern for more Venezuelans.³ It is in this context of integration and modernization that we look at some of the AD governments' projects and accomplishments.

The adecos Betancourt and Leoni have sought to put into practice what their party long preached was necessary in order to bring about a modern and integrated Venezuela. Their governments, in this respect, signified a break with the past. To a generation of governments prior to 1958 (with the exception of the AD trienio), the swelling tide of "black gold" had appeared as a virtually inexhaustible treasury in comparison to which all other economic opportunities shrank into insignificance. This had been the predominant governmental attitude and it had proved nearly disastrous because it created a highly sophisticated industry (oil) while leaving untouched the traditional economic basis (agriculture).

The Acción Democrática idea was to use the profits of the petroleum industry as a basis for the economic--as well as political--integration of all groups in the Venezuelan society. This was a response to social and economic maladjustments which had reached an intolerable scale in the wake of the corrupt and narrowly based Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. Acción Democrática, with a wide popular basis and with a reformist program, was destined to capture the Venezuelan executive in fair and honest elections held in

³Supra, chap. I.

1958 and 1963. Presidents Betancourt and Leoni, once in power, made a serious--and largely successful--attempt to fulfill their party's programmatic ideals. Betancourt and Leoni's programas de gobierno centered on the same basic principles of their party: a comprehensive agrarian reform,⁴ development and protection of labor rights,⁵ a nationalistic but flexible and pro-democratic international policy,⁶ and a program of industrial diversification and of social welfare. It is to the latter two that we devote our attention next.

Acción Democrática and the Industrial Diversification of Venezuela

In spite of Pérez Jiménez' avowed desire to diversify the Venezuelan economy,⁷ the decade of his administration was marked by a further dependence on petroleum as the sole means of governmental revenues and by the stress on magnificent construction projects (superhighways, colossal public buildings, super housing projects, etc.) rather than on what is usually considered the infrastructure of economic progress (e.g., agrarian reform, secondary or farm to market roads, education, etc.). Thus, at the end of the Pérez Jiménez administration, Venezuela was essentially a monoculture.

⁴Supra, chap. VI.

⁵Supra, chap. VII.

⁶See chap. IX.

⁷Tarnóí, El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela, pp. 243-262.

The petroleum sector, which had transformed Venezuela from a sleepy, agricultural economy into the world's largest exporter of petroleum, was still the sole driving force of the economy. Despite the avowed policy of diversification and given the realization of the inevitable eventual exhaustion of its major resource, in 1959 petroleum still accounted for more than 90% of total exports, contributed 60% of public revenues, and generated more than one-fifth of GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

The economy remained heavily dependent upon foreign trade--exports accounted for 30 to 35% of GDP throughout the 1950's. As already indicated, petroleum accounted for better than nine-tenths of total exports, with iron ore accounting for most of the rest. Nearly half of all consumer goods were supplied from abroad in the 1950's, including more than one-third of total food consumption. Imports of machinery and equipment never fell below 85% of the total gross investment in those goods between 1951 and 1959 and, in fact, averaged about 95% of the total over the period.⁸

⁸These figures can be obtained in Banco Central de Venezuela, Informe Económico (Caracas: Banco Central de Venezuela, 1962), p. 100; Banco Central de Venezuela, Informe Económico (Caracas: Banco Central de Venezuela, 1963), p. 110; Banco Central de Venezuela, Memoria, 1959 (Caracas: Banco Central de Venezuela, 1960), p. 308; Venezuela, Oficina Central de Coordinación y Planificación, Plan de la Nación, 1963-1966 (Caracas: Oficina Central de Coordinación y Planificación, 1963), passim. The economic situation encompassed by these figures led a Venezuelan economist to conclude that "the [Pérez Jiménez] administration was characterized by a lack of coherence in economic policies, by a notable disequilibrium in the growth of different economic sectors, by an accentuation of the differences in income distribution, and by the strengthening of the general dependency

The governments of Presidents Betancourt and Leoni not only made diversification a key to their economic policy but they have also gone a long way towards institutionalizing and realizing this policy. The national economy is gradually becoming less dependent on petroleum as the sole source of revenue. Thus, in his last message to Congress, Betancourt disclosed that the gross national product reached Bs 30,140 million (Bs 4.5 = \$1, approximately) in 1963 as against Bs 24,327 million in 1958, representing a yearly increase of 4.5%. The growth of the gross national product at the rate of 5.8% in 1963 was particularly gratifying to the President because it occurred when the rate of growth of the oil sector was hardly 1.5%. That could be a strong indication that Venezuela was indeed in the process of economic diversification, for to attain an overall growth of 5.8% in 1963, it had been necessary for other sectors to grow at an average rate of 7%.⁹

On March 11, 1966, President Leoni could report further signs of diversification. While the rate of increase of the oil sector was 2.3%, industrial production increased 11% in 1965 over 1964 and the participation of the industrial

of the Venezuelan economy on exterior or foreign factors." D. F. Maza Zavala, "La Economía de Venezuela: Un Sinopsis General," Caribbean Studies, VI (January, 1967), 24.

⁹"Last Message as President Presented to Congress," Venezuela-Up-to-Date, XI (Spring, 1964), 6-7; Albert P. Williams, "Industrial Diversification and Venezuelan Public Policy" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1965).

sector in the gross national product was 18%. During that year, 316 new industrial projects, representing an investment of Bs 201 million were registered. Agricultural production increased 7.5% in 1965, mainly accounted for by larger yields of rice, sesame, plantains, cotton and sugar cane. Sugar production became one of the largest agricultural activities in Venezuela; but although there was a surplus of 73,000 tons, only 17,000 tons were exported to the U.S. because of a quota system.¹⁰ More than 100 concerns produced plastic in 1965, but could not meet the growing internal demands. The production of iron ore increased by 11% in 1964-65; and so on down the line for almost every item.¹¹ A whole new industry--petrochemicals--was hailed as a major success of the Leoni administration early in 1967. Up to a few years ago the field of petrochemicals, considered a natural for any oil-producing country, had been neglected in this country which was the world's number one oil exporter. Now Union Carbide, along with W. R. Grace, Allied Chemical, and several equally important European companies, were concluding deals with the newly created government agency, the Instituto Venezolano Petroquímico (IVP), to spur petrochemical

¹⁰ In the 1950's large amounts of foreign exchange had been spent for obtaining sugar abroad. See "Follow the Example of the Venezuelan Sugar Industry," New York Times (January 22, 1968), p. 66.

¹¹ "Mensaje Presidencial," El Nacional (March 12, 1966), p. A-1.

development.¹²

To accomplish diversification, Betancourt and Leoni chose several methods.¹³ They adopted a policy of protection for manufacturing through the devices of high tariffs, through absolute prohibition or limitation of imports by decree, and through the establishment of exchange controls.¹⁴ This method was largely responsible for the growing Venezuela-based automobile industry and for the outstanding expansion in the textile, food processing, and pharmaceutical industries.¹⁵

A second method employed to promote diversification was through the reactivation of the Corporación Venezolana de Fomento (CVF) and, through it, the investment of considerable

¹² New York Times, January 23, 1967, p. 56; Antonio Ledesma Lanz, Conciencia Nacional del Porvenir Petroquímico (Caracas: Oficina Central de Información, 1965), pp. 1-41. A generally favorable reaction from private Venezuelan sectors towards this governmental plan is found in Asamblea de la Cámara de Industriales, "El Plan Gubernamental de Expansión de la Industria Química Venezolana," Producción [Caracas] (May, 1965), pp. 15-21.

¹³ Leopoldo J. Bello M. "Algunas Observaciones sobre los Procedimientos Utilizados para Proteger la Industria Nacional," Producción [Caracas] (September, 1963), pp. 20-31.

¹⁴ Rómulo Betancourt, Confianza en el Presente y el Porvenir de Venezuela (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1959).

¹⁵ "Speaking of Business and Finance," Venezuela-Up-to-Date, XII (Spring-Summer, 1966), 16; "Volkswagen de Venezuela," El Nacional (October 16, 1965), p. D-17; "Política de Protección a la Industria Textil," El Universal (October 9, 1965), p. 51.

sums to aid private investors in various manufacturing fields. As originally constituted by Betancourt in 1946, the CVF was supposed to aid the development of both agriculture and industry; subsequently, during the Pérez Jiménez period, its activities were confined to the urban economy, largely to manufacturing and power. Up to 1958, CVF aid to industry and agriculture did not amount to much--Bs 525 million--particularly when compared with Bs 1.7 billion granted in loans, mainly to industry, between 1958 and 1964.¹⁶

More recently, the Corporation has shifted from a passive to an active policy to hasten the economic diversification process. Instead of being content with waiting for loan requests, it now goes as far as making, after comprehensive surveys, concrete and detailed plans for the creation of certain industries regarded as useful to the country's economy, and submits them to business interests, along with assurances of financial assistance.

A procedure has been devised whereby CVF builds plants and installs equipment to be leased to small and medium-sized industries with enough working capital to start

¹⁶For terms of comparison, see Ricardo González C., La CVF y su Doctrina Económica (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1956), and Corporación Venezolana de Fomento, Obras de la Corporación Venezolana de Fomento, 24 de Noviembre de 1948 a 2 de Diciembre de 1953 (Caracas: Editorial Bellas Artes, 1953), both published during the Pérez Jiménez administration, and "La Corporación Venezolana de Fomento Contribuyó Decididamente a la Vigorosa Política de Industrialización del Régimen Democrático: Memoria 1963," Carta Informativa de la CVF (April 15, 1964), p.s.n. An overall recent assessment appears in "Venezuelan Development Corp. Invests Heavily in Agriculture and Intermediate Industries," New York Times (January 22, 1968), pp. 65, 68.

operations. After ten years, when over 50% of the building cost has been paid, the lessee may purchase the entire property by paying the balance. Equipment may also be bought within a five year loan period. Under this program, 18 plants were built in 1964 and 32 started construction in 1965. As to the larger industries, the CVF presented 152 projects requiring an investment of Bs 342 million to a group of businessmen associated with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Production in April of 1965.¹⁷

A third method used by the government to diversify industry is to make itself the "catalyst" by supplying the principal elements of the infrastructure of the economy--electricity, transportation, and others--and establishing and maintaining the principal heavy industries in the nation, including steel, petrochemicals, and aluminum. This method, because of its far-reaching implications and because of its magnitude, deserves a more detailed survey.¹⁸

Enrique Tejera París, a long time AD leader, economist, and later ambassador to the United States, was largely responsible for the original conception and organization of

¹⁷ Venezuela, Secretaría de la Comisión Nacional de Financiamiento de la Pequeña y Mediana Industria, Programa de Financiamiento a la Pequeña y Mediana Industria (Caracas: Tipografía Vargas, n.d.); "Industries Expanding Faster than Anticipated," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Fall, 1965), 6.

¹⁸ For more detailed treatment of CORDIPLAN, see Friedmann, Venezuela, From Doctrine to Dialogue and Fred D. Levy, Jr., "Economic Planning in Venezuela," Yale Economic Essays, VII (Spring, 1967), 273-321.

Venezuela's system of national planning in which the government--at the national as well as at the local and regional levels--would be the catalyst for diversified industrialization. The Office of Coordination and Planning (CORDIPLAN) emerged as the key institution in this process in 1958. When CORDIPLAN was created, an atmosphere of extreme political and economic uncertainty pervaded Venezuela. The newly elected government of Rómulo Betancourt was not seriously expected to survive its constitutional five-year term; indeed, no popularly elected Venezuelan government ever had. The fall of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship in January, 1958, coincided with a severe weakening of the world petroleum market, which combined with the uncertain political situation to bring a decade of vigorous--if distorted by its overemphasis in certain sectors, especially petroleum--economic growth to an abrupt end. A primary goal of CORDIPLAN was not only to renew and expand economic growth but also to devise ways of better using all Venezuelan resources.¹⁹

The tasks allocated to CORDIPLAN were manifold. Established within the Office of the Presidency of the Republic, CORDIPLAN was made responsible for preparing studies on national development, making alternative projections and keeping the general social and economic development plan on schedule, maintaining overall consistency in programming through consultations with the private sector, preparing the

¹⁹Enrique Tajera París, Dos Elementos de Gobierno (Caracas, 1960), p. 339.

annual program budget in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, proposing guidelines for the planning and location of physical facilities, coordinating through sectorial agencies the preparation of regional and local plans, assisting the President in supervising the execution of programs, directing the training of planning officials, and coordinating techniques of planning in public agencies to ensure uniformity. In 1959, CORDIPLAN was further entrusted with coordinating all technical assistance activities in the country, exercising general supervision over programs and projects and evaluating their results.

To coordinate the activities of the many government ministries and independent agencies dealing with economic and social problems, CORDIPLAN has organized a series of committees to deal with specific problems in which more than one governmental agency is concerned. All agencies dealing with a given problem are represented on a committee by a high-echelon official. These committees meet regularly and seek to work out general policies and strategies in order to avoid duplication of effort and expenditure. Industrialization, medical and health problems, and the agrarian reform have been three of the fields in which CORDIPLAN committees have been active and in which it has had some success--perhaps in a descending order. In agrarian reform particularly, political differences and difficulties in budgeting and personnel have resulted in limited CORDIPLAN success.²⁰

²⁰See *supra*, chap. VI; Fred D. Levy, Jr., "Economic Planning in Venezuela" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Economics, Yale University, 1965), *passim*.

The preparation of the budget has offered CORDIPLAN better opportunities to coordinate the activities of the various government agencies.²¹ On long-range planning, this agency has also been made responsible for the elaboration of "four-year national plans" that set forth general goals in terms of economic and social development for a determined period of time. These national plans are "rolling" or "revolving" plans, in the sense that every two years the plan period is extended by another two years. Thus the first plan covered the period 1960-1964, the second plan 1963-1966, and the third plan 1965-1968. At each of these three points in time the national plan is revised in order to keep it as close as possible to accomplishments and to new projections.²²

In drawing up the national plans, CORDIPLAN was required by law to consult with the private sector. With regard to the business community, this consultation was minimal during most of CORDIPLAN's first four years. Business was initially apprehensive of the Betancourt regime and interpreted planning to imply greater government incursions into the private sphere. On the other hand,

²¹ Antonio Ugueto Trujillo C., "Evolución de la Estructura del Presupuesto Venezolano en los Últimos Diez Años," Revista de Hacienda [Caracas], XXVI (October-December, 1962), 31-37.

²² Mustafa F. Hassan has written extensively on this topic. See, for example, his "High Growth, Unemployment, and Planning in Venezuela," Economic Development and Cultural Change, XV (July, 1967), 452-464.

CORDIPLAN technicians believed that productive communication would not be possible, since none of the business leaders had been trained in economic planning or understood what "national planning" meant. In order to comply with legal requirements, CORDIPLAN did consult with the business community, but such consultation came after the national plans had been drafted. Small modifications might then be made on the basis of these consultations.

Less formal links between CORDIPLAN and the private sector did exist, however, and should not be overlooked. The national plans were widely discussed in the public media. Further, CORDIPLAN maintained close ties not only with the AD leadership but also with the Christian Democratic Party (COPEI) and the ministries controlled by them. At the close of the Betancourt administration, these ties with the private sector had been considerably strengthened. Levy explains this more intimate relationship in this fashion:

By that time, the business leaders were coming to realize that CORDIPLAN was not promoting the extinction of the private sector, and that, planning may mean no more than the greater governmental efficiency that they themselves had always advocated. Furthermore, led by native industrialists who saw their own futures in the development of the country, businessmen were becoming more and more convinced of the necessity for a national development effort combining the energies of both private and public sectors. At the same time, CORDIPLAN was increasingly realizing that the private sector must be made an active participant in the planning process if its activities were to be coordinated in the national effort.²³

²³Levy, "Economic Planning in Venezuela," Yale Economic Essays, p. 281.

On a more specific level, CORDIPLAN has elaborated a "National Highway Development Plan," it has supervised the Community Development Office (for community action in necessary local public works);²⁴ and because of CORDIPLAN's insistence on regional programs, it has been intimately associated with the development of the Guayana region.

The overall philosophy that has guided CORDIPLAN in all its activities encompasses what it considers to be the fundamental goals of Venezuela:

- (1) The greatest possible welfare for all Venezuelans, to be achieved through full employment of the labor force and through an equitable distribution of wealth, using the expanding resources of the several regions of the country in the most efficient way possible;
- (2) Economic independence, through an adequate diversification of the economy and an optimal growth of the national product, especially on the basis of the best possible utilization of the income obtained from the just participation of the nation in the extractive industries.²⁵

In this early statement CORDIPLAN had echoed some of Acción Democrática's major programmatic themes²⁶ and soon these were translated into plans and policies of national,

²⁴ Oficina Central de Coordinación y Planificación, División Desarrollo de la Comunidad, Community Development in Venezuela (Washington, D.C., 1966); Oficina Central de Coordinación y Planificación, División Desarrollo de la Comunidad, El Desarrollo Comunal como una Política Generadora de Empleo (Caracas: CORDIPLAN, 1965).

²⁵ Venezuela, Oficina Central de Coordinación y Planificación, Plan de la Nación, 1963-1966, p. XII.

²⁶ See supra, chap. IV.

regional, and state significance. Eventually CORDIPLAN asserted its position as the key agency in regional planning and development. It established a framework for local-national coordination in these more geographically restricted projects and it became involved not only in the selection of sites for regional corporations but also in budget allocation for these complexes.

The Guayana program, the regional project that has existed the longest, is usually taken as the model of Venezuelan planning to achieve greater diversification.²⁷ In this program, the AD governments undertook their major effort at coordinated resource development in a distant and hitherto little known part of southeastern Venezuela. Several goals were encompassed in this effort--diversion of urban migration from Caracas-Maracaibo to a much smaller city, Santo Tomé de Guayana and its satellite towns; diversification of industry by the development of iron, power, and several other large and small industries; expansion of better opportunities to thousands of Venezuelans who would participate in the program and have a voice in the running of the new city and in the future of the program itself.²⁸

²⁷ John Friedmann, Regional Development Policy: A Case Study of Venezuela (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1966). Other regional programs have emerged and have been patterned after the Guayana model. See "CORPOANDES," El Nacional (December 2, 1964), p. D-1. These programs have all been placed under the general direction of CORDIPLAN.

²⁸ La Región de Guayana: Una Gama de Oportunidades para la Inversión (Caracas: Corporación Venezolana de Guayana, 1963); Alexander Ganz, "Regional Planning as a Key to the Present Stage of Economic Development of Latin America: The Case of the Guayana Region, a Frontier Region." Paper

A beginning had been made a few years earlier by putting into operation two iron-mine concessions under the management, respectively, of the United States and Bethlehem Steel Corporations. At about the same time, the government had undertaken the construction of a steel mill and a 350,000 kw hydroelectric plant on the Caroni River.²⁹ But these had been treated as only isolated projects. Though they related to each other--the steel mill would be a major consumer of both the iron ore and the electric energy produced in the region--the manner in which the Guayana scheme would relate to national economic development was only vaguely stressed and it did not appear to be the prime motivation behind the governmental plan.³⁰ It was left to the governments elected after the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez to articulate a new program in which the development of Guayana's resources was seen integrally as a part of a national program for industrialization and the region itself as a permanent, structural element of an expanding

read before the First Latin American Regional Science Congress, Caracas, November 12-14, 1962.

²⁹The iron deposits in the region (El Pao) had been discovered in the early 1930's, but transport problems in getting the ore from the mine to the market were not solved until 1950. The rich Cerro Bolívar deposits were discovered by an aerial survey in 1946. After eight years of exploration and construction work, a U.S. Steel subsidiary, the Orinoco Mining Co., began to exploit and export the iron ore. See Lieuwen, Venezuela, pp. 118-119.

³⁰See Tarnó, El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela, pp. 23, 255-259, 308-312.

inter-regional system. Economic, social, and physical components were to be fused in planning for the region so that a unified conception might take shape. The new task was to go beyond industrial production to the creation of a new region deep in the interior of the country which but a few years earlier had been a virtually unpopulated geographic space.

The city of Santo Tomé de Guayana was to be the focal point for the series of interrelated industrial complexes that would, in time, transform the region's potential wealth of natural resources into a steadily rising level of living for the local population. At the same time, it would contribute to the long-term strategy of national development in the form of diversified foreign exchange earnings and intermediate product supplies to an expanding national market.³¹

Five such complexes were found to be potentially suitable to the area: iron and steel products, electro-metals, electrochemicals, heavy machinery, pulp and paper. In addition, the region was to become the principal supplier of electric power to the rest of the nation. Related to these ambitious prospects, heavy investments were to be undertaken in mining, construction materials, agriculture, forestry, and tourism. Projections of the region's economic

³¹ Corporación Venezolana de Guayana, Guayana: Cornerstone of the Development of Venezuela (Caracas: CVG, 1963).

basis appeared to favor a possible expansion of the city of Santo Tomé de Guayana to more than half a million inhabitants before the end of the century.

Thus, from the inception of the Guayana development under Pérez Jiménez to the 1960's project under the AD government, the whole Guayana program had been reoriented-- from a narrow exploration of iron ore for export to the conception and undertaking of a far-ranging plan for the utilization and improvement of the various natural resources. The program would now have a strong welfare orientation and would be carried out within the context of a national development plan. Commensurate with this vision, the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana (CVG) was created as an autonomous agency in 1960, modeled in some respects on the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Responsible for the overall planning and coordination of the scheme, the CVG was given far-reaching powers to do the job.³²

The Guayana program fit well into the goals and ideology long proclaimed by the AD leadership. Guayana was to become the showpiece of a new regional emphasis in the design of government policy. Hence, the focus of the project was to be the economic and social development of the traditional Guayana and the city of Santo Tomé de Guayana was to become the principal gateway to this region. The long-held

³²Venezuela. Presidencia de la República. Decreto No. 430 (Caracas, December 29, 1960), chap. XI.

AD tenet of diversification was here underlined with the development of other indigenous resources such as iron and water power. This development was intended as the AD-government's concrete demonstration of its diversification policy.

To man this huge, diverse program, a veritable stream of people have been attracted to Guayana. It is estimated that an average of 800 people a month come to Guayana, mostly from the over-populated and impoverished Oriente. It was estimated that by 1975, 400,000 inhabitants will be living in Guayana and that by that time 40% of the region's resources will be under exploitation.³³

Favorably located with respect to the resources that were to be brought into the scope of the national economy, Guayana was to become the country's principal base for heavy industry. The nationalistic orientation of Acción Democrática provided another reason for the strong interest Presidents Betancourt and Leoni displayed in the future of the region. For as long as Guayana was simply an exporter of ore concentrates, it would remain an essentially colonial economy, an exclave, dominated by foreign interests and almost completely at the mercy of foreign markets. The Guayana program, on the other hand, was to be a national effort, conceived and carried out by Venezuelans and involving the in-site production of many items--especially

³³ Américo Fernandez, "La Realidad y el Futuro del Complejo Industrial de la Guayana Venezolana," El Nacional (June 20, 1966), p. D-9.

machinery--sorely needed for Venezuela's entire expanding economy.³⁴

The most ambitious construction project in Venezuela became the Guri hydroelectric plant which, when its final phase is completed, will produce 6 million kw of cheap power for all of Venezuela and even for some of its neighbors, Trinidad, Guayana (formerly British Guiana), Brazil, and Colombia. This project, when finished, will compare with the Krasnoyars project in the U.S.S.R., which was also designed for a similar kw capacity. Guri, in its final phase, will have three times greater output than the Aswan project on the Nile.

The primary purpose of the Guri project is to open up a large region to agriculture and to population. Thus, the first stage in the project development calls for the creation of a lake covering 80,000 hectares (Ha.) of virgin land to hold 17,700 billion cubic meters of water. At the completion of the Guri project, the lake will cover 328,000 Ha and store 103,000 billion cubic meters of water.

While Guri, it is contemplated, will produce power equal to the total amount now being produced in all of Brazil, the potential of the lower Caroni River--the final 210 km of the stream above its confluence with the Orinoco River in the Guayana Region--is estimated at 10,500,000 kw. This project has also been studied and surveyed and is ready

³⁴"Caracas Wants in on the Action," New York Times (January 22, 1968), p. 70.

for execution when needed. This is believed to be the largest hydroelectric potential on the South American continent and one which augurs well for the industrial expansion of the whole area.³⁵ In addition, the region holds perhaps the highest concentration of natural resources to be found anywhere in the world.

Economic strategy during the Betancourt and Leoni administrations has thus revolved around the highest possible investment of public funds in basic heavy industry along with necessary social services and agricultural improvement. It has required a concentrated effort to create wealth from activities other than petroleum, an effort that has focused largely on the overall development of the Guayana Region. Hence the phrase "to sow the petroleum," the motto used in many of the Acción Democrática pronouncements, has meant the use of the profits from the oil industry in the creation of new industrial complexes. The petroleum wealth, which is still the greatest source of investment capital in the country, is being plowed back into the ground.³⁶ Impressive examples of this policy are the

³⁵ "Power for Heavy Industry in Guayana," New York Times (January 28, 1966), p. 71; "Venezuela Electric Output to Double," St. Petersburg Times (February 11, 1964), p. 6-A; "Venezuela Boom Draws Jobless," Miami Herald (February 9, 1965), p. 8-A; "Home-Grown Ruhr," Newsweek (February 22, 1965), p. 48; José Montes Escalona, "El Reportaje: El Progreso Económico de los Países se Mide por el Consumo de Energía Eléctrica," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 325-334.

³⁶ Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Venezuela Builds on Oil," National Geographic Magazine, CXXIII (March, 1963), 344-387; Michael Bamberger, "Venezuela's Oil," Venture, XVIII (September, 1966), 19-23; Raúl Leoni, "Análisis de la

Venezuelan state-owned steel industry on the Orinoco River and the mixed investment aluminum industry, both part of the Guayana Project.

The steel plant, built with government revenues largely from petroleum taxes, is designed for an eventual production of 1,200,000 tons of finished products annually. Production has now reached 750,000 tons per year, some of it used in Venezuela and the rest shipped abroad to Latin countries and elsewhere. At the same time, the increasing production of electric energy, coupled with abundant bauxite deposits, is facilitating the emergence of an aluminum industry. A mixed enterprise of the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana and Reynolds Aluminum is now completing a commercial plant which went into production in 1967, at a cost of Bs 120 million, 60% of which was being financed under terms very beneficial to Venezuela.³⁷

Overall, the government had spent \$506 million in five years (1960-1965) on the giant Guri dam, a steel mill, hydroelectric and aluminum plants, housing, schools, highways, and other works. By 1970 the government investments in the Guayana will reach \$1.5 billion, financed partly from petroleum royalties and partly from loans from the World

Política Petrolera," Economía y Administración [Maracaibo], V (January-March, 1966), 157-166.

³⁷ Rafael Alfonso Ravard, "El Desarrollo de Guayana," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 111-128.

Bank.³⁸

In charge of the development is Rafael Alfonso Ravard, a Venezuelan army engineer with the rank of general and a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. For Ravard, the human factors are the most important in the whole Guayana project--

The human resources are the most important factor in all development process. All the natural wealth and the work of man--the forests, the hydroelectric production, the industrial plants, the construction of cities--acquire significance only when they are placed harmoniously in service in function of the human factor. The basic objective of the human development may be defined as the promotion and stimulation of the active participation and cooperation in the process of developing the whole region by all persons and groups in all sectors of the population.³⁹

In order to achieve this objective, the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana has stimulated a number of studies designed to obtain better information about the region's people--their situation and their needs. It has pushed for the improvement of technical skills through trade schools and special classes for the large number of obreros who, for the most part, have only the rudimentary skills required of a subsistence farmer. The Corporación has also backed the building of hospitals, sanitary centers, and recreation units. It has stimulated the strengthening and the development of local government institutions, by always bringing the

³⁸ On a yearly basis, the CVG receives 10% of the Venezuelan annual budget of \$2 billion; New York Times, January 23, 1967, p. 56.

³⁹ Ravard, "El Desarrollo de Guayana," p. 126; our underlining.

locally-elected officials into the CVG's discussions of new projects and plans.⁴⁰

It is of interest that at least for the time being, the CVG's attempts to fulfill the ideal of "human development" as defined by Ravard have been crowned with success. A recent detailed survey of the Guayana population found that Guayanans, though not unqualified in their satisfaction with all of the CVG's aspects as they affect them personally, were appreciative of the improvement of their own private lot. Further, and perhaps more significantly, they were extremely optimistic about their public and private future.

When asked to forecast their situation five years hence, 77% of those interviewed declared that it would be "better" as compared with a mere 4% who said it would be "worse." When asked to project the situation of Venezuela as a whole 20 years hence, optimism was higher--86% affirming that it would be "better" contrasted with 3% saying "worse." Optimism reached a peak when respondents were asked to contrast the opportunities available to children now with their own opportunities as children. Over 90% considered their children's opportunities to be "more" (of whom about half insisted on saying "much more") as contrasted with 4% saying

⁴⁰ This method of bringing the locally-elected officials into the CVG's discussions and plans is similar to the "cooptation techniques" employed by the TVA and referred to by Philip Selznick, TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1949), *passim*. It is also interesting to note that a number of former TVA officials have acted as consultants to the CVG.

"the same" and 3% who said "fewer." This extraordinary optimism about the future, especially their children's future, was again apparent in their overwhelming belief that capable young Venezuelans had practically unlimited chances in the near future to gain high positions--in government, the military, a large economic enterprise, in the professions, or in politics.⁴¹

In a similar vein, AD leaders and members who were interviewed by the author showed a widespread awareness and approval of the Guayana project. Of the 58 adeco leaders questioned, 54 of them (93.1%) approved of it; all 58 had heard of the project. Of the 50 adeco members questioned, 36 of them (72%) approved of the project, while a total of 40 of them (80%) had heard of the Guayana project. All those questioned came from various backgrounds--lawyers, obreros, campesinos, clerks, small merchants, etc.⁴² Another writer attests further that the "majority of opinion [in Venezuela]" seems to share this optimism and this approval of the Guayana project. He concludes that

What the Venezuelans are doing in the Guayana region is carving out their own El Dorado which holds out much hope for diversifying this nation's resources at a time when few Latin American nations have made much headway

⁴¹Daniel Lerner, "Conflict and Consensus in Guayana," in Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, pp. 479-512. The optimism of the Venezuelans stands in marked contrast to the sense of hopelessness felt by the people of many Latin American countries. See the series of attitude studies conducted by Lloyd A. Free's Institute for International Social Research, Princeton, New Jersey.

⁴²For details on the interviews and a breakdown on those polled, see Appendix.

in the effort. If successful in the long run, the plan could serve as a pilot project for other Latin American nations. But right now, Venezuelans here are much more concerned with making the Guayana plan a workable and viable instrument in their nation's economic and social development.⁴³

Of equal interest has been the CVG's as well as the whole AD diversification program's success in avoiding the concerted opposition of the business community. Without that community's active participation, in fact, plan targets, policies, and projects would likely not be attained. Peasant and labor organizations could be considered politically "safe" and could be more or less relied upon to go along with AD's national programs. But many businessmen in 1958 were suspicious of the AD government's intentions to the point of hostility. Only by gaining their support--or, at the very least, their acquiescence--could the AD Presidents avoid a repetition of the 1948 events.

Fortunately for Betancourt, conservative business groups remained without organizational backbone until 1962. At that time AVI (Asociación Venezolana de Independientes) was formed, evidently to exert influence on the national elections scheduled for the following year. AVI did not claim to be a political party as such, although it did frequently behave as one. It was financially powerful and basically distrusted the "New Dealish" philosophies espoused by the major parties, especially Acción Democrática.⁴⁴ AVI,

⁴³James Nelson Goodsell, "Industrial El Dorado Glitters in Venezuela," Christian Science Monitor (November 11, 1967), p. 9.

⁴⁴These conservative business groups found their

however, did not present a completely unified front, even under pressure of the 1963 elections.⁴⁵ A "Liberal" wing within AVI exerted a moderating influence on many of its policies, thus blunting its attacks on the government programs.

The so-called progressives in the business community tended to coalesce around another "nonpolitical" organization, Pro-Venezuela, which had been founded in 1958. Basically the organization was sympathetic to the AD government, although it maintained a public stance of nonpartisanship. Its membership was much more broadly based than AVI, including on its National Council most of the important organized groups in Venezuela such as the Church, professional associations, the military, newspapers and women's groups. But businessmen predominated, not only in its membership but in financial support as well. Pro-Venezuela spoke chiefly for the new industrialists, commercial farmers, and small merchants throughout the country. In contrast to AVI, its position was more nationalistic and among its primary goals was the rapid industrialization of Venezuela's economy. "Buy Venezuelan" became its favorite

spokesmen among the reporters and editors of the publications La Esfera and Observaciones Económicas of Caracas, both of which frequently cited Ludwig van Mises and Friedrich Hayek as their ideological sources. See supra, chap. IV.

⁴⁵ See supra, chap. IV; Boesner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," pp. 73-96; Documentos (July-September, 1962), p. 718; Documentos (January-March, 1963), pp. 717-718.

slogan. It maintained constant contact with the government, especially through the Ministry of Development (Ministerio de Fomento), but communicated as well with other major agencies of the government and also with Presidents Betancourt and Leoni. This flow of communication has not been unidirectional, however; the government has often requested the opinions of Pro-Venezuela.⁴⁶

Significantly, the progressives within the business community derived their main strength from provincial areas such as Aragua, Carabobo, Lara, Portuguesa, Zulia, Anzoátegui, while the conservative stronghold remained in Caracas. Coincidentally, it was from the provinces, from the periphery rather than Caracas, that the main support for Acción Democrática came. Further, this alignment of interests reflected the changing character of Venezuela's economy⁴⁷-- its industrialization, the incorporation of the provinces in the economic life of the nation, the critical importance of government in economic development, the need for a protective nationalistic policy during the period of economic transition, the increasing interdependency of economic institutions.

These differences between progressives and conservatives

⁴⁶ Pro-Venezuela receives a monetary contribution from the Venezuelan government, which represents about one-fourth the association's annual income, the rest being contributed by its members. An account of the organization's many activities can be found in Asociación Pro-Venezuela, Orígen, Doctrina y Acción de 4 Años (Caracas: Asociación Pro-Venezuela, 1962).

⁴⁷ Julio Cotler, "El Proceso de Cambio de la Elite Venezolana," América Latina [Rio de Janeiro], VIII (April-June, 1965), 13-26.

in the Venezuelan business community are further clarified in this schematic summary visualized by Friedmann:⁴⁸

	<u>CONSERVATIVES</u>	<u>PROGRESSIVES</u>
<u>Sectors</u>	Large commerce (especially in import-export lines) and banking-finance	Industry, commercial farming, small- and medium-scale business enterprises
<u>Geographic Focus</u>	Caracas	Provinces
<u>Doctrine</u>	Free enterprise; anti-welfare; anti-government	Recognition of the role of the state in economic life; acceptance of welfare; pro-government
<u>Nationalism</u>	Weak	Strong
<u>Organizational Focus</u>	AVI (after '62)	Pro-Venezuela (after '58)

Progressive and conservative elements in the business community often find themselves working side by side as members of the large Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEDECAMARAS). As the name implies, FEDECAMARAS is a federation of virtually all of the regional and sectoral private economic organizations in the country and, as such, is considered the high level representative and spokesman for the nation's private business interest.

Annually, the member organizations gather together to discuss the major issues of national economic policy,

⁴⁸Friedmann, Venezuela: From Doctrine to Dialogue, p. 43. This is a slightly modified version of the Friedmann scheme.

such as industrial diversification, the national plans, etc., and to formulate a united position in their regard. Business' positions on the major issues are then submitted to the President, to the various ministers, and to other relevant agencies, public and private. Because of its size and economic power, FEDECAMARAS is a voice that must be listened to, either directly or indirectly, in the formulation of overall economic policies. On the other hand, the potential power of FEDECAMARAS is greatly diminished because its "positions" are often compromises between the demands of progressive and conservative elements as well as divergencies between the regional and national interests the organization seeks to encompass.

Early in the Betancourt administration, an attitude of mutual antagonism seemed to exist between FEDECAMARAS and the AD. Many businessmen had cooperated closely with General Medina Angarita, whom the AD had conspired to overthrow in 1945. For their part, many adecos blamed the business "oligarchy" for the long life of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship which, in turn, had overthrown the AD government in 1948. This mutual antagonism started to give way to better communications when President Betancourt began to actively seek the advice of business leaders on various legislative projects and when the business community itself saw less reason to fear "expropriation" in the case of agrarian reform, "nationalization" in the case of the oil industry, or "socialization" in the case of private enterprise. Further, with the passage of time, many businessmen and entrepreneurs

began to benefit from the government's economic policies and thus found themselves closer to the views expressed by the AD than to the views which had been traditionally expounded by FEDECAMARAS.⁴⁹

By recognizing the differences that divide the Venezuelan business sectors, Betancourt and Leoni have been able to use these differences for their own political advantage. Many technical and administrative positions have been filled with progressive elements, even when they are not members of the ruling party. Uslar Pietri, closely associated with AVI, was a member of the Leoni coalition government for several months. The overall "national plans" have been used as a basis for consultation with all qualified sectors⁵⁰--business as well as labor, government as well as technicians. The same process of consultation has gone into the drafting of major legislation, such as the agrarian reform law. Thus, in a variety of ways, sectors of the Venezuelan society have been given a chance to participate in--as well as to benefit from--the AD governments' determination to diversify and to integrate the country's economy.

Improving the Welfare of All Venezuelans

Education

In less than a decade, the democratic governments of

⁴⁹Levy, Economic Planning in Venezuela, pp. 39-40, 58-61.

⁵⁰Luis Fernando Yepes, "FEDECAMARAS y el Plan de la

Venezuela have achieved spectacular advances in the field of education, so much so, that their literacy program has been the object of great interest on the part of developing countries with similar problems.⁵¹ Despite enormous difficulties, both quantitative and technical, all educational services have substantially expanded and improved since 1958.

Several men in the high echelons of Acción Democrática and in government have expressed their deep awareness that the long-term success or failure of their efforts to establish a democracy in Venezuela, together with a healthy and stable nation, depends as much on their ability to educate the people as it does on their ability to govern.⁵²

In 1959 there were 1,094,000 pupils enrolled in pre-school and primary classes and in 1964-1965 this figure had

Nación," El Nacional (July 16, 1963), p. A-4. In this article, Héctor Hurtado, the CORDIPLAN director in 1963 is quoted as saying that "this consultation . . . is the beginning of a rational and democratic planning of public expenditures." This, incidentally, is the major theme of Friedmann's Venezuela: From Doctrine to Dialogue.

⁵¹ "Illiteracy Rate Second Lowest in Latin America," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Winter, 1965-1966), 8. Two UNESCO officials were reported as saying, "In the world drive against illiteracy, Venezuela is a pilot country in the Latin American area. The experience gained by that country will be incorporated into the program sponsored by UNESCO for other countries." See also "Venezuela: Laboratorio Pedagógico," Ercilla [Chile], XXXII (June 15, 1966), 31-36; "Venezuela: A National Literacy Project," UNESCO Chronicle, XII (September, 1966), 334-337.

⁵² Eduardo Rivas Casado, "Desarrollo de la Educación Democrática en Venezuela," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 75-86; J. M. Siso Martínez, Alfabetización y Desarrollo (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, n.d.), pp. 1-17.

increased to 1,395,000--up 27.5%. At the same time, 32.7% more teachers were employed. The number of schools increased from 9,650 in 1959 to 13,329 in 1964-1965. In secondary education, enrollment jumped 92.4% between 1959 and 1965. The number of secondary education buildings during the same period rose 65% and faculties by 81.2%.⁵³ For the 1965-1966 period, pre-school and primary students numbered 1,481,353 under 43,368 teachers; secondary students numbered 189,583 under 9,097 teachers.⁵⁴ The national government during the Pérez Jiménez administration spent an annual average of 6.1% for education while the annual average for the Acción Democrática governments amounted to 12.9%.⁵⁵

The industrial diversification of the country demanded a rise in technical instruction and this, in turn, created a greater need for teacher training as well as new buildings solely for this type of education.⁵⁶ In 1959-1960 there were

⁵³Rivas Casado, "Desarrollo de la Educación Democrática en Venezuela," pp. 75-86.

⁵⁴Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 380. The discrepancy between primary and secondary student enrollment reflects the fact that Venezuela, like the rest of Latin-American countries, suffers from a very high dropout rate at all levels of education. The average educational attainment of the population is estimated at about three years of schooling (ibid., p. 379).

⁵⁵Venezuela, Ministerio de Hacienda, Evolución de los Gastos del Gobierno Nacional 1954/55-1958/59 (Caracas: Ministerio de Hacienda, 1960); Venezuela, Ministerio de Hacienda, Resumen del Proyecto de Presupuesto 1966 (Caracas: Ministerio de Hacienda, 1965).

⁵⁶Ruth Lerner de Almea, "Las Finalidades de la Educación y Nuestro Systema Actual," Universalía [Caracas], II (January-February, 1965), 13-16; "Plan de Gobierno del Presidente Betancourt," Documentos (May-August, 1960), pp. 379-440, especially p. 423.

1,944 instructors in 135 technical schools, while in 1964-1965 there were 4,188 instructors teaching in 232 schools with an enrollment of 82,100. The number of these students grew to 93,088 in the 1965-1966 period.⁵⁷ The university enrollment in the 11 Venezuelan universities underwent an even greater expansion at the same time that courses in economics, engineering, and chemistry became as prestigious as those of "philosophy and letters," and law and medicine. Faculties expanded--there were 2,797 members of university faculties and 244 of normal schools in 1963-1964, and many of these were, for the first time, on a full-time basis. The university enrollment rise is clearly shown in this table:

TABLE 16

UNIVERSITIES AND NORMAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENT INCREASE,
1957-1958 to 1965-1966^a

Years	Universities		Normal Schools	
	1957-1958	1965-1966	1957-1958	1965-1966
Students	10,270	37,637 ^b	346	12,831 ^c

^aSources: Rivas Casado, "Desarrollo de la Educación Democrática en Venezuela," p. 83; Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 380.

^bDoes not include 6,312 students in private universities.

^cIncludes students both in private and public normal schools.

⁵⁷Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 380.

While these figures are gratifying to AD Presidents Betancourt and Leoni, their greatest feeling of pride seems to stem from the governments' accomplishments through the National Institute for Educational Cooperation (INCE) and the spectacular gains through the literacy drive. The INCE, created in 1959 as an entity within the Ministry of Education, was organized with the support of government agencies, business, and labor organizations. Its purpose is to improve the skills of workers and give them broader educational opportunities through direct training at plants, and indirect instruction at specialized institutions. It also maintains training programs for young men and women, many of them unemployed. Between 1965 and 1968 it planned to aid a total of 367,000 individuals.

Under INCE's "ordinary program," students are trained through direct, practical instruction in training centers and cooperating business enterprises. The funds for this program come from private enterprise, workers, and the State. This nationwide program offers courses in professional formation to "workers-in-service"--courses in mechanized agriculture, collective bargaining, carpentry, public administration, to name but a few. The "workers-in-service" can be salaried employees, managers, peasants, management supervisors, or simply illiterate workers.

An "extraordinary program" was instituted in 1964 to provide job training for both employed and unemployed youths. During 1965, 62,000 employed and 16,000 unemployed

youths attended these special INCE courses. This program was aimed at an accelerated training of persons between 16 and 25 and was totally financed by the State.

The mushrooming operations led INCE to begin its own teacher training in order to produce faculties to man its courses. In a related program, the Center for Development Studies at Central University in Caracas began holding specialized seminars for planning and for the preparation of development projects and the University of Oriente in Cumaná began to expand its basic science and technology facilities to train specialists for the development of the eastern part of the country (which includes the Guayana region).⁵⁸

The literacy program, carried out with a great deal of imagination and through a variety of means, has scored spectacular achievements. By mid-1965, the illiteracy rate was only 10.9% of the total population above 15 years of age. Only Argentina, with an illiteracy rate of 10%, out-ranked Venezuela in Latin America. This was accomplished through an intensive drive in which more than one and one-half million people were taught how to read and write after 1958, when the illiteracy rate was 38.4%. The poor education

⁵⁸ Oscar Palacios Herrera et al., "El INCE en el Proceso de Desarrollo Económico del País," *Política*, IV (August-September, 1965), 95-109; INCE, *El INCE y Sus Programas* (Caracas: INCE, 1967); Inter-American Development Bank, *Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America*, pp. 380-381.

record of the Pérez Jiménez decade (1948-1958) also becomes clear when one realizes that in 1948, 40% of the population was illiterate.⁵⁹ In contrast, the AD governments plan to make their superb educational record even more striking by turning an additional 360,000 adults into literates between 1965-1968, at the rate of 120,000 a year.

The program was being carried out by 2,727 centers divided into several categories. By the end of 1965, 163,300 adults were receiving instruction under 43,552 teachers, of which 34,820 were legionarios alfabetizadores--students of normal and secondary schools, and of the last two grades in primary schools--who volunteer to work in their spare time. These made up the backbone of the program.

In the cities, illiterates over 14 years of age may start at any of 453 Popular Cultural Centers. After learning how to read and write, they were taught a trade and four elementary school courses. In rural areas, they attended Collective Literacy Centers, of which there were 397; and when ready, they were taught arithmetic, Spanish, geography of Venezuela, natural science and principles of sanitation. Reflecting the Acción Democrática goal of integrating the peasant into the cultural life of the nation, nearly 70% of

⁵⁹ Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 379; "Illiteracy in Venezuela Cut Sharply in Decade," New York Times (February 11, 1968), p. 26. The latter source pointed out that the national educational budget had gone from roughly Bs 342 million in average years of the Pérez Jiménez administration to Bs 1.4 billion annually in the AD decade.

the public schools were located in rural communities of less than 1,000 inhabitants.

The purpose of 682 Cultural Extension Centers, each under a certified teacher, was to expand the education of the literates, although anyone else could be admitted. Radio Schools were an innovation introduced by the Office of Adult Education in 1964 to improve the level of the rural population. From a broadcasting station in San Fernando de Apure, educational talks, literacy lessons, and musical programs were broadcast daily to 427 centers equipped with receiving sets. Programs ran from 4 to 9 P.M., and were designed to reach the campesino after he had completed his day's work.

Five hundred forty-seven Mobile Teachers were especially trained as supervisors to travel by automobile and call on literacy centers in order to control and guide the work of voluntary literacy teachers.

Farming Schools had a double purpose--educational and social. They gave a basic academic education and trained young people 14 years old and over in farm work, in a way as attractive as possible, with the purpose of encouraging them to stick to the land and prevent their migration to the cities. Eight schools of this type were in operation at the end of 1965. The one in Apure State, which is typical, had grown around a regular community and had 15 farmhouses, barnyards, pigpens, rabbit warrens, and 75 acres of land planted in cotton, plantains, beans, and vegetables.

Similar in purpose to these farming schools were four Farming and Cattle Breeding Training Centers. The Centers

trained large numbers of adults in farming and cattle raising practices, so that they might cooperate in the execution of agrarian reform programs.

Available to women were 23 centers where, after becoming literate, they could learn a profession, a trade, or any branch of the fine arts such as designing. Women could also receive training in the Popular Cultural Centers in sewing, garment making, book binding, commercial art, drawing, home economics, or secretarial work.

That the literacy figures and the means to achieve them were no mere creation of a propaganda-minded Ministerio de Educación was underlined by the fact that the Venezuelan educational program, especially its literacy projects, was being closely examined and followed by other countries. Some of them, like Nicaragua and El Salvador, adopted the program in its entirety, while Venezuelan teachers demonstrated their technique in Bolivia, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panamá. Even Spain publicly announced its intention of employing some of the methods used in the Venezuelan program.⁶⁰

Our own conversations with over 100 AD leaders and members clearly showed that both groups considered Betancourt's and Leoni's educational programs as major achievements. Education was mentioned as an essential part of the AD program in the responses of 53 leaders (91%) and 43 members (86%). When

⁶⁰ "Illiteracy Rate Second Lowest in Latin America," p. 8; Sanchez, The Development of Education in Venezuela, passim.

asked what was the best way to achieve greater literacy, leaders and members actually asked for "more of the same"--schools, teachers, technical schools, craft training centers, etc. The 108 adecos interviewed came from various educational and economical backgrounds.⁶¹

Our findings seem confirmed by a recent survey of Venezuelan labor leaders--pro-AD and otherwise. Not only did these leaders consider education an essential factor, in improving one's personal condition as well as that of the country, but they also felt that the educational system as devised by the government was far superior to that of private schools. They viewed education as crucial in gaining access to better jobs and positions--jobs and positions which they optimistically considered "open" to all qualified Venezuelans. They seemed to concur with the INCE's slogan "there are no underdeveloped peoples, only undereducated peoples."⁶²

⁶¹See Appendix.

⁶²Francisco de Venanzi, "Los Líderes Sindicales y la Educación," El Nacional (April 10, 1966), p. A-4. The survey reported by Venanzi was undertaken by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Center for Developmental Studies of the Universidad Central de Venezuela in 1963-1964. Other revealing details of the survey: 82% of the labor leaders had confidence that they could ascend socially if properly educated and trained; 90% felt anyone could educate himself and become a lawyer--a profession well respected in Venezuela; 23% felt the highest compliment was to be considered an intellectual; 95.3% considered teaching an important activity and 57.9% felt that university students did what was of importance to the country. The survey polled 200 leaders of the government-oriented Confederación de Trabajadores Venezolanos (CTV) and 96 of the Central Unica de Trabajadores Venezolanos (CUTV), more left-oriented than the CTV and including Communist organizations.

Housing

The AD governments' record on housing is not as spectacular as it is on education and in part it reflects the seriousness of the housing shortage at the end of the Pérez Jiménez administration. The housing projects of the dictator entailed a monumental construction program largely confined to the metropolis and which served to further attract thousands of peasants to the capital.⁶³ Campesinos flocked to Caracas in the hope of finding a job in one of the public construction programs, and a home in one of the public housing projects. More often than not, their skills were insufficient to obtain a job and they found themselves forced to live in the abject poverty of the ranchos. More than 65,000 families, who represent a fifth of the Caracas population, live in those hovels even now.⁶⁴

The improvement of housing conditions, seriously aggravated by a population explosion and rural-urban migration, did receive President Betancourt's attention,⁶⁵ although he has often been accused of failing to tackle this problem and of concentrating instead almost exclusively on rural problems. Whatever the merits of this accusation,

⁶³For an official account of the Pérez Jiménez record on housing from 1948 to 1954, see Tarnó, El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela, pp. 283-286.

⁶⁴Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 377.

⁶⁵"Last Message as President Presented to Congress," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Spring, 1964), 6-7.

there is no doubt that housing became one of the cornerstones in President Leoni's governmental program.

With a certain exaggeration but also with a great degree of truth, it has been said that "for the first time in its history, Venezuela [under Leoni] has a defined policy concerning housing."⁶⁶ From the moment that he was sworn into office, a major preoccupation of the new president was to provide housing for all Venezuelans with insufficient means for immediate purchase. Leoni's first step was the appointment of a commission to prepare a housing and urban reform program.⁶⁷

The Commission report, completed in early 1965, stated that the housing shortage would reach 800,000 units by 1968, taking into consideration both the population increase and existing homes needing replacement. The Commission submitted a housing program requiring an annual expenditure of Bs 1.22 billion (\$268 million) and advocated the centralization of all government agencies dealing with housing and sanitation services. The new centralizing agency, forecast by Leoni in his inaugural address, was to

⁶⁶ "The Achievement of Venezuelan Democracy," New York Times (January 28, 1966), p. 73.

⁶⁷ It should be stressed that this commission had the benefit of much preliminary work done during the Betancourt Administration. See, for instance, Banco Obrero, Maracaibo: Estudio del Problema de la Vivienda y de sus Servicios Complementarios (Caracas: Banco Obrero, 1963).

become the National Institute of Housing.⁶⁸

On the basis of the Commission report, the Congress acted by providing for the building of homes for 75% of the population earning less than Bs 1,200 monthly, with the following provisions: (1) the cost of services to be recovered through quotas by the buyers; (2) the land where the house stands to be leased, but the buyer having the option to purchase the land and pay for basic sanitary services; (3) the house to be sold outright on terms as long as 30 years at 4% yearly interest.

That the program was specifically directed toward all those families in the lower income groups became apparent in other provisions as well. Thus, prices of homes would range from Bs 6,000 to Bs 17,000 (\$1,320 to \$3,740 respectively), with monthly payments between Bs 28 and Bs 82 (\$6 to \$19).

Private capital would be invited to build these types of homes and offered inducements such as exemptions from municipal and other taxes, government assistance for land acquisition, and a government guaranty on mortgage payments.

⁶⁸"New President Outlines his Government Program," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Spring, 1964), 3-5. See also President Leoni's report on the progress being made in his National Housing Plan, El Nacional (January 2, 1966), p. A-1. To date, however, the housing program has not been centralized under a single agency and the Banco Obrero (Workers' Bank) remains the principal agency concerned. Other entities directly involved are the Ministry of Health, the National Agrarian Institute (IAN), the Ministry of Public Works (MOP) and the Venezuelan Guayana Corporation (CVG).

Medium-income groups were also included in the housing program, though under different provisions. They would get a chance at home ownership through the Savings and Loans Associations which, though receiving official support and guarantees, are private enterprise undertakings. Higher income groups needed no government assistance to buy homes; their purchases could be easily financed by the regular mortgage banks and other credit institutions.

The overall housing program called for the construction between 1965 and 1968 of 150,300 homes for one million people in the low-income bracket, at the cost of Bs 1.5 billion and 30,000 homes for middle-income families at the cost of Bs 1.17 billion.⁶⁹ Of the 150,300 low-cost housing units, 67,000 are to be built in cities of over 25,000 inhabitants; 12,300 in towns of 10 to 12,000 inhabitants, and 71,000 in small communities. Between the start of the housing policy and the end of 1966, 48,059 housing units of all kinds were ready for occupancy, with 16,444 units still to be completed. The total, therefore, of 64,703 units exceeded original goals for the first two years of the plan.⁷⁰ These figures did not include housing units built under the National System of Savings and Loan Associations and entirely private enterprises or by the Rural

⁶⁹"Ambitious Housing Program Launched," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Fall, 1965), 5.

⁷⁰"Housing Expands Rapidly under New Financing Programs," New York Times (January 22, 1968), p. 67.

Housing Division (DVR) of the Department of Mariology and Environmental Sanitation.

The DVR erected 22,703 homes in more than 600 rural communities between 1961 and 1965, with the help of a U.S. \$12 million Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) loan. In 1965 the DVR undertook construction of another 18,000 units, financed in part by another IADB loan of U.S. \$10 million. At the end of 1966, 13,830 houses had been completed and 1,320 were under construction. In most of its programs, the DVR successfully made use of self-help and mutual aid methods.⁷¹

It would thus seem accurate to say that the housing gap in Venezuela, estimated as one of the most serious in Latin America, was gradually being narrowed. The construction industry, which had gone into decline after the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez and the stoppage of large building projects in the capital, again showed great activity.⁷² The overall housing picture thus contrasted with the rather meager accomplishments of the Betancourt government in this respect,⁷³ in spite of that president's desire to improve

⁷¹Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 377. The Rural Home Building Program is conducted in coordination with the agrarian reform program.

⁷²"Building Again," Daily Journal [Caracas] (October 3, 1965), p. 8; New York Times, January 23, 1967, p. 63.

⁷³Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 271-281, especially p. 279.

living conditions for the Venezuelan people.⁷⁴ Further, Leoni, with his balanced plan, was clearly attempting to avoid Pérez Jiménez' penchant for super-apartment buildings concentrated almost exclusively in Caracas⁷⁵ and Betancourt's apparent predilection for rural housing projects.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Rómulo Betancourt, Viviendas para Todos: Definición de una Política (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1959).

⁷⁵In La Esfera (July 31, 1961), p. 6, it was reported that Pérez Jiménez had built 97 superbloques (huge multiple dwelling projects) in Caracas alone, with apartments for 180,000 people in 1956-57. The Banco Obrero spent Bs 700 billion in these Caracas projects. These spectacular buildings have proved highly unsatisfactory as a solution to the housing problem. Usually many stories high, not all of them are equipped with elevators, and the water does not always have sufficient pressure to reach the higher stories. People were often forcibly moved from their slums to these buildings, but many times slums were razed faster than superbloques were built. The living conditions in the superbloques, furthermore, has deteriorated to such an extent that the author was told that the superbloques were worse than the ranchos (slums), that the police did not venture inside; and that repairmen risked their lives--as well as the sure loss of their tools--whenever they worked in one of the superbloques. This critical appraisal can be substantiated in various sources. See, for example, Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 274-275; Morón, A History of Venezuela, p. 243; Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 287-291; and D. F. Maza Zavala, Paradojas Venezolanas (Caracas: Talleres Gráficos "Mersifrica," 1959), pp. 274-275. The most detailed (and critical) evaluation of Pérez Jiménez' superbloques is probably contained in Venezuela, Banco Obrero, Proyecto de Evaluación de los Superbloques (Caracas: Banco Obrero, 1959).

⁷⁶Betancourt stated his feelings thus, "The Banco Obrero is constructing them [houses] throughout Venezuela and is changing its policy. Hitherto, in the thirty years that the Banco Obrero has existed [from 1928], 75% of its construction has been concentrated in the macrocephalic city of Caracas, and only 25% in the provinces. This must be reversed, because if not, a city will continue to grow which we well know does not have the conditions required for a manufacturing center, since its land is very costly and it does not have water. It should be a government and commercial city. . . . We are not going to abandon the city of Caracas, . . . but the situation must be reversed in which more than 60% of the budget is spent in one city, thus multiplying its problems, as has

Leoni's program was designed specifically (though not exclusively) for lower-income families throughout Venezuela. These would be families who would otherwise be unable to bear the costs of obtaining a house through private channels. At the same time the government indirectly helped the private housing companies through tax privileges and by granting special loans for middle income level families who wanted to buy on the private market. By early 1968, then, Venezuela could indeed claim to be one of the very few Latin-American countries which had a comprehensive housing policy. More importantly, in Venezuela this policy was being implemented. Both policy and implementation seemed to reflect the sentiment of AD party members and leaders who, in conversations with the author, placed housing second only to a high cost of living as Venezuela's major problem.⁷⁷ Yet, in tackling the housing problem, Leoni had clearly marked out the government's role--to help directly the lower-income families, to assist indirectly the middle-income families, to stimulate the housing industry through special loans, tax exemptions, and the like.

Health, Social Welfare Services, and Public Utilities

A clear-cut case of successful accomplishment can be

occurred in the capital of the republic." Rómulo Betancourt, Dos Años de Gobierno Democrático 1959-1961 (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1961), p. 45. A similar statement appears on p. 105.

⁷⁷ See Appendix.

made for the improvement of health conditions in Venezuela during the presidencies of both Betancourt and Leoni. If it can be said that the Venezuelan democratic revolution has made itself felt in all aspects of national life, the health of the people, the improvement and expansion of social services and child care, especially, have received priority attention. It is not difficult to substantiate this assertion.

The national government during an average year of the Pérez Jiménez administration spent Bs 324.6 million in health and social assistance, a sum which corresponded to 8.2% of the total governmental budget. In contrast, during an average year of the Betancourt-Leoni administrations, the national government spent Bs 667.8 million for the same purposes, a sum which corresponded to 10.3% of the total governmental budget. The budget of the Ministry of Health alone rose from the 1959 level of Bs 365 million to Bs 527 million in 1965 and the 1966 budget envisaged the expenditure of Bs 684 million for health.⁷⁸

In 1959, public hospitals, 109 in number, had 20,456 beds. By 1965 this figure had increased to 21,151 beds in 137 centers. The ratio of hospital beds per inhabitant increased

⁷⁸ Venezuela, Ministerio de Hacienda, Evolución de los Gastos del Gobierno Nacional, 1954/55-1958/59, passim; Venezuela, Ministerio de Hacienda, Memoria, 1963 (Caracas: Ministerio de Hacienda, 1964), passim; Venezuela, Ministerio de Hacienda, Resumen del Proyecto de Presupuesto 1966, passim.

from 3.14 per thousand in 1959 to 3.31 per thousand in 1965-- and these figures did not include private facilities, many of which have been built with government help.

The 1965-1969 hospital construction program calls for 7,120 additional beds. In 1964, new health centers started serving Colón, Tovar, Cumanacoa, and Rio Caribe. During 1965, hospital services were inaugurated in Acarigua, Maturín, Quibor, Villa de Cura, Ciudad Ojeda and Upata. A large health center also opened its doors in Caracas.

Nutrition has also improved notably during the years since 1959, not only through various special educational drives, but also because of better distribution of individual incomes. The school lunch program expanded from 409 units in 1959, feeding 72,900 pupils, to over 2,500 lunchrooms serving some 756,000 students in 1965. The Patronato de Comedores Escolares plans to increase its services until all indigent students will be able to eat in supervised school lunchrooms and receive other health benefits as part of the Government's policy in child welfare.⁷⁹

The Venezuelan Children's Council (Concejo Venezolano del Niño), the principal organization for assisting underprivileged children, especially from the moral and social point of view, helped 62,599 children in 1965 through preventive programs and 11,691 through rehabilitation programs

⁷⁹ Domingo Guzmán Lander, "Democracia y Salud Pública," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 47-63. Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 378.

in fully equipped centers and under expert technical assistance. Camping for city children and sanitation and social programs for all children but particularly those in the rural regions are part of the Concejo's many activities.⁸⁰

The number of deaths from diseases related to environmental sanitation and lack of vaccination has declined appreciably during the Betancourt-Leoni administrations. Significant decreases have been noted in contagious diseases and those traceable to contaminated water supplies. Massive anti-polio drives have virtually eradicated the disease in Venezuela. The dangers of gastroenterites, likewise, have dropped so dramatically that deaths, which formerly stood at 101.1 per thousand cases in 1959, were reduced to 72.3 per thousand in 1964. Much of the credit for these improvements can be attributed to better living conditions, better child care, and to rehydration centers.⁸¹

Some 34 municipalities, covering an area of 132,000 km², came under malarial and other insect control programs in 1965. A half million ranchos and chozas (substandard dwellings) were disinfected during 1966 to bring protection to over 1,100,000 past or potential victims of Chagas disease. Strong sanitation measures have constantly been

⁸⁰"Consejo Venezolano del Niño Informa," El Nacional (January 8, 1966), p. C-8. This is one of the regular information bulletins of the CVN. See also Consejo Venezolano del Niño, El Consejo Venezolano del Niño y la Obra Pro-Menor en Venezuela (Caracas: Editorial Sucre, 1955).

⁸¹Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, pp. 235-239.

maintained against yellow fever, human cases of which have not appeared for years.

Similarly, malaria, which had long been a scourge for thousands of Venezuelans, has not been registered as a cause of death since 1962. This achievement is all the more remarkable when this fact is compared with a yearly average of 7,000 reported deaths 30 years ago when as many as one million people were affected by the disease. Malaria was then one of the first three causes of death in Venezuela.⁸²

It is true that this does not mean that the scourge has been entirely eradicated in the country. Even with the progress made, it is estimated that 5,000 people are still suffering from malaria. But the prompt treatment of malaria patients has caused the death rate to drop to zero.

Though the fight against malaria was started in Venezuela in 1936, shortly after Gómez' death, when the Malariology Division of the Ministry of Health was created,⁸³ it did not gain momentum until 1946. At that time, the discovery of DDT and Betancourt's determination to improve health conditions transformed the Division's efforts into a major anti-malaria crusade. Workers were deployed all over rural Venezuela to spray DDT on every wall in every house, a project that is still in full operation because Venezuela's neighbors even now have large malarial regions. In contrast,

⁸²Ibid., pp. 236-239, 243, 276-290, 254; Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 378.

⁸³Allen, Venezuela, a Democracy, pp. 131-162.

Venezuela is today the third country in the world with the largest malaria-free area in relation to its population (the first is the U.S. and the second, the U.S.S.R.) and the first among all tropical countries. This has made Venezuela's program a model to be copied by several other countries plagued with the same trouble.⁸⁴

Another sanitary program that has been greatly improved during Betancourt's and Leoni's administrations is that of providing pure water to all cities and towns in Venezuela. Between 1959 and 1964, 342 rural aqueduct systems were installed. In 1959 only 726,000 inhabitants had water service but by 1964 this figure rose to 1,573,000. In 1965, 70% of the rural population in communities between 500 and 5,000 inhabitants and 87% of urban residents had potable water. In 1958, only 1,676,000 people had public water service in towns over 5,000. By 1963 there were three million people thus served, and by 1965 four million. Thus, the goal of providing potable water to all cities and towns in Venezuela within the immediate future appears to be perfectly reasonable.⁸⁵

⁸⁴"Malaria Control Program Copied by Other Nations," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Spring-Summer, 1966), 15; Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 287-292.

⁸⁵"Inversiones en Obras Públicas Como Factor del Desarrollo Económico y Social de Venezuela," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 196-204. An IADB survey concluded that "water supply in Venezuela is better than in most Latin American countries," Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 378.

Along with these programs, the recent governments of Venezuela have devoted great attention to improving the welfare of the population. This marks a break with past policies. Thus, traditionally the sphere of private interests, most specifically of the Catholic Church, welfare activities today are predominantly state-maintained, with Church participation chiefly in the field of education.⁸⁶

Social consciousness on the part of the government made a first timid appearance after Gómez' death, with model legislation aimed at protecting the worker, improving and expanding the educational system and maintaining facilities for the supervision of public health. It was at this time that the Ministry of Health and Social Service came into existence, along with other government entities charged with the execution of social service programs.⁸⁷

In general, the realization of plans has not been in complete coordination with the high goals set by the progressive legislation. Most fruitful by far have been the periods in which the Acción Democrática, with a socially oriented party platform, has been in power.⁸⁸ The Constitutions promulgated during AD administrations reflect this

⁸⁶ Isidoro Alonso et al., La Iglesia en Venezuela y Ecuador (Bogotá: Oficina Internacional de Investigaciones Sociales FERES, 1962), pp. 35-56.

⁸⁷ Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia, pp. 123-136; Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 203-213.

⁸⁸ Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 230-233; U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, pp. 118-140.

basic concern. In the 1961 Constitution, an entire section is devoted to social rights, which include the right to work and to an education and the protection of health. The State also claims the responsibility of protecting the family and insuring its moral and economic well-being.⁸⁹

Although the Ministry of Health and Social Service bears the main responsibility for welfare programs, one of the oldest social welfare agencies--social security--is associated with the Ministry of Labor. The Institute of Social Security, which operates as an autonomous agency with funds independent of the National Treasury, is governed by a directive body comprised of government, employers' and employees' representatives.⁹⁰

Very recently, as envisaged by the 1961 Constitution, the whole social security program has been expanded. The new law, prepared with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO), was scheduled by the Venezuelan Congress to go into effect beginning in 1967.

Under the new system, more workers are covered; old age and death pensions are added to the full medical assistance given to the Venezuelan worker and his family provided in the old system. The new law covers also all government employees--federal, state, and municipal. Benefits for disability and old age are provided for them, but not medical

⁸⁹ Pan American Union, Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, 1961. pp. 12-15.

⁹⁰ Ericson, Labor Law and Practice in Venezuela,
pp. 32-34.

assistance--for the time being--until the agencies from which they now receive these services are incorporated into the expanded Social Security System. Through its provisions for old age pensions and death benefits, Venezuela is trying for the first time to give some kind of protection to a sector of the population unable to take advantage of private insurance policies because of its low income.

The Social Security System of Venezuela is financed by employers and workers paying a tax on the latter's salaries, and by a government subsidy. With the new law in effect, employers pay an initial tax of 7, 8, or 9%, on their employers' salaries, according to the risks involved in the work, whether minimum, medium, or maximum. Employees pay a flat 4% tax. The government provides whatever else is necessary to run the System out of special funds.

With few exceptions, everyone who works for wages and every professional must pay the Social Security tax, no matter how much he earns, but benefits are only enjoyed on the first Bs 3,000 (approximately \$137) of any monthly salary or income. Domestic servants and temporary workers are not yet covered.⁹¹

The original Social Security Law was passed by the Venezuelan Congress in 1940, but it was not until 1944, during the Medina Angarita administration, that the System began operating, first in the Federal District (Caracas).

⁹¹"Social Security to Cover All from Birth to Death," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Fall, 1966), 4-5.

The AD trienio attempted to expand and restructure the System, but without experience or traditions to go by, the new programs in social welfare had to be developed by trial and error. Clinics were improvised, beds rented from private hospitals, doctors paid a fee for each case they treated. Gradually, hospitals began to be built, equipment improved, doctors hired on a salary basis, and the System expanded to other areas. Complete figures for the Pérez Jiménez administration are not available, but he did build major hospitals both in Caracas and in Barquisimeto and his publicly-expressed intentions were to follow the lead of the AD trienio in the realm of social security legislation.⁹²

After 1958, the National Plans closely followed the AD goals of planned expansion in terms of coverage as well as of geographic areas served by the Social Security System.⁹³ The System now maintains 26 dispensaries, 42 clinics and 16 hospitals with 1,650 beds, in addition to another 630 beds rented from government-supported hospitals. Three hospitals are under construction in Caracas, Valencia, and Barquisimeto, with a total of 1,130 beds, but even when they are finished, over 1,000 beds will be needed. The number of employees is about 8,000 including 1,845 doctors. The combined facilities

⁹²Tarnóí, El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela, pp. 263-286.

⁹³Antonio Leidenz, "Hacia la Ampliación del Seguro Social en Venezuela," Política, IV (August-September, 1965), 65-73; Levy, "Economic Planning in Venezuela," Yale Economic Essays, pp. 296-299.

and personnel, however, are admittedly insufficient to meet demands.⁹⁴

The National Government pays for the construction of hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, and for equipment and administration out of the budget of the Labor Department, under which the Social Security System operates. With the inclusion of thousands of new workers, income was estimated to reach Bs 700 million (about \$31 million) in 1967.

Other welfare activities are administered by the Division of Nutrition of the Ministry of Health and Social Service. Besides the school lunch program already mentioned, the Division of Nutrition maintains over 800 stations where PL, a capsule combination of proteins, minerals, and vitamins is distributed free of charge mostly to children and pregnant women. These stations most frequently operate at Rural Medical Stations, dispensaries, and Mother-and-Child Centers. A number of public dining rooms also exist, mainly in the cities, which offer balanced meals at low prices.

Under CORDIPLAN, a well advanced National Community Development Program has evolved for the execution of medium-sized public works under the supervision of government technicians. The cost of the program, which is aimed at the improvement of rural conditions, is borne jointly by the National Government, by the state and municipal governments, by private organizations, and by the Agency for International

⁹⁴The figures quoted are from "Social Security to Cover All from Birth to Death," pp. 4-5; for earlier programs see Ericson, *Labor Law and Practice in Venezuela*, passim; U.S. Army, *Area Handbook for Venezuela*, pp. 135-136; Tarn61, *El Nuevo Ideal Nacional de Venezuela*, pp. 277-283.

Development (AID). Between 1960 and 1965, 1,481 communities with a population of some 2 million inhabitants participated in the program. In 1966, 255 schools for 19,000 students, 993 homes for 5,551 persons, 84 aqueducts serving 182,584 inhabitants, 63 medical dispensaries, and 115 community centers were constructed. Other projects were also carried out, including construction of small bridges, sewerage systems, community workshops, feeder roads, and school lunchrooms.⁹⁵

In the realm of public utilities, the administrations of Betancourt and Leoni have been particularly concerned with the development and expansion of the Venezuelan hydroelectric system for the improvement of living conditions, especially in rural areas, as well as for industrial diversification particularly in the Guayana region.

The electric power supply is considered to be sufficient to meet present needs, according to a detailed study undertaken by the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).⁹⁶ However, to keep pace with the increasing demand for electricity arising from rapid population and industrial growth, particularly in the urban centers, the government has prepared extensive studies and plans for the

⁹⁵ Inter-American Development Bank, Socio-Economic Progress in Latin America, p. 382.

⁹⁶ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The Economic Development of Venezuela, passim.

utilization of the hydroelectric potential which exists in the Guayana Highlands and the Andes and has devoted considerable attention to electrification in its four-year economic plans.⁹⁷

From 1950 to 1961, the generation of electrical energy increased at a cumulative annual average of 18%, considerably higher than that of other Latin-American countries. In fact, Venezuela leads Latin America in the amount of electricity per capita. Thus, Venezuela showed in 1965 a ratio of 803 kwh per person; Chile, 701 kwh/hab.; Trinidad-Tobago, 670 kwh/hab.; Uruguay, 615 kwh/hab.; Argentina, 555 kwh/hab.; Paraguay, 55 kwh/hab.; and Honduras, 54 kwh/hab.⁹⁸

In Venezuela itself, the growth of electrical consumption had been extremely fast in the past few years as Table 17, based on official figures released by CORDIPLAN, indicates.

Conclusions

In the realm of utility expansion as well as welfare and industrial diversification programs, the AD governments of Betancourt and Leoni have sought to spread the burdens--

⁹⁷Hector Hurtado, "El Plan de Venezuela, 1963-1966," Política, III (September, 1963), 11-29.

⁹⁸Venezuela a la Cabeza de América Latina (Caracas: CADAPE, 1965); Montes Escalona, "El Progreso Económico de los Países se Mide por el Consumo de Energía Eléctrica," pp. 325-334.

TABLE 17
GROWTH IN ELECTRICAL CONSUMPTION^a

	1950	1963	1966 ^b
Industrial Consumption (million kwh)	186	3,578	5,300 ^c
Nonindustrial Consumption (million kwh)	271	1,911	3,190
Total (million kwh)	457	5,489	8,490
Population Served (million hab.)	1.9	5.5	6.7
Consumption per capita (kwh)	87	705	998
Installed Capacity (thousand kwh)	180	1,479	1,728

^aSources: Marrero, Venezuela y Sus Recursos, p. 499; Política, IV (August-September, 1965), pp. 325-334.

^bEstimate.

^cNotice the tremendous increase registered in the industrial consumption between 1950 and 1966; another indication of the industrial diversification taking place in Venezuela especially in the 1960's.

and the benefits--to all sectors of the Venezuelan society. Important legislation such as that of agrarian reform has been passed only after the government had made a serious effort to obtain the views of widely diverse groups of interests, not only the campesinos and the hacendados, but also the industrialists and the clergy. The "national plans" have been used as means of consultation rather than as rigid guidelines to be followed for years. Further, each national plan is constantly reviewed in order to reflect better the trends and the demands of the immediate situation. The

CORDIPLAN has acted not only as the highest planning agency within the government but also as a focal point for the discussion of projects and as a forum where various economic and political interests can be heard.

Diversification has meant the protection of national industry as well as an open door policy for foreign investors who, along with the government and Venezuelan entrepreneurs, can make major capital investments in large industrial complexes. The development of the Guayana region has attempted to pull human migration away from already overcrowded Caracas at the same time that it will provide the capital city with the necessary electricity for its exploding population. In housing as well as in social welfare, the government has striven to avoid infringing upon those areas that can be served by private enterprise or private insurance plans. Education has been reoriented with the aim of reducing illiteracy and providing those already literate with the kind of technical training they most need in order to participate actively in and benefit from a rapidly industrializing society. In every instance, and at every stage, there has been a great deal of consultation, compromise, and moderation. If this gradual course has alienated some more revolutionary elements from AD, it has made it possible for AD Presidents Betancourt and Leoni to obtain the support--or at least the acquiescence--of the business and industrial sectors. This has enabled the AD governments to avoid thus far a repetition of the 1948 events and, at the same time,

has made it possible for Betancourt and Leoni to claim that they are Presidents for all Venezuelans, not only the campesinos and the trabajadores who have supported them most loyally. In this sense, too, Acción Democrática has had a chance to prove that it is indeed a multiclass party--a label it perhaps failed to live up to during the trienio when too much may have been attempted in too short a time for the apparent benefit of only certain restricted sectors of the Venezuelan society. Further, the AD governments' diverse and geographically widespread programs have been beneficial for the entire society and have thus contributed to increased national integration. In short, in resource utilization and in welfare improvement, Betancourt and Leoni have steered a middle course of compromise, of consultation, of gradualism that has emerged and developed from a wide spectrum of participants, that has resulted in benefits for many sectors, and that has produced no concerted opposition. A similar middle course has been attempted in the realm of foreign policy, where the slogan has become "firm and rational nationalism" in dealing with other nations.

CHAPTER IX

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNDER ACCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA GOVERNMENTS

The international relations of Venezuela during the Acción Democrática governments in the trienio and since 1958 have reflected that Party's preoccupation with displaying a "firm but rational nationalism."¹ This has meant an attempt to find the roots of Venezuela's relations with other countries in the actions and ideals of the Liberator, Simón Bolívar, as well as a constant striving to bring these ideals to bear upon current foreign policy problems and situations. Fortunately for both Presidents Betancourt and Leoni, the problems and situations confronted by them have so far fallen short of those that confronted Bolívar, who lived to see most of his national and pan-American dreams utterly shattered. Similarly, Betancourt and Leoni have been fortunate in that their foreign policy decisions, though at times creating strains within their party, have strengthened

¹ Demetrio Boesner, "Guayana Esequiba: Una Reclamación Firme y Sensata," Política, IV (March, 1966), 21-26; Leoni, "View from Caracas," pp. 639-646, where the President speaks of his foreign policy in terms of "will, courage, and a high sense of responsibility"; Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 44, 235-237; Rómulo Betancourt, Hacia América Latina Democrática e Integrada (Caracas: Editorial Senderos, 1967), *passim*; Raúl Leoni, "Un Nacionalismo Firme y Sensato," Política, IV (April, 1966), 93-104.

their own stand as Presidents for all Venezuelans and enhanced their country's international standing in the Hemisphere and in the world.

Firmness has been exercised in dealing with Venezuela's oldest international problems--those involving border questions. In the case of the Venezuela-Guayana border, this firmness may well result in an eventual compromise that will meet Venezuela's claims at least half way. Firmness, coupled with rationality, is helping to solve the difficulties between Venezuela and Colombia, as negotiations proceed towards joint ventures beneficial to both countries.

This same combination of firmness and rationality has been employed in dealing with questions of a more economic and ideological nature. Outright nationalization of foreign enterprises has been forsaken at the same time that native industries have been protected and promoted. An open door policy toward foreign investors has been coupled with a conscious stimulation of mixed enterprises in Venezuela. "Anti-Communism" has meant a continuing coolness toward Castro--but also the embrace of reformist movements similar to AD itself throughout Latin America. And if these stands have meant the loss of radical nationalists and fidelistas within AD, they have, on the other hand, brought to Betancourt and Leoni the sympathy of conservative elements throughout the whole country and the active support of the military. This sympathy and support have been crucial in the survival of constitutional government in Venezuela. By

the same token, the policies that have evoked this broad, nonpartisan spectrum of sympathy and support have served to integrate diverse elements within the Venezuelan society at the same time that they have enhanced the country's prestige among its peers in the international realm.

Boundary Questions--Old Problems and New Approaches

In the late eighteenth century, Venezuelan patriots sought recognition and material aid from the United States and the principal European powers. Miranda and Bolívar won sympathy and some unofficial support in the U.S.² and elsewhere, but it was not until the end of the Napoleonic Wars that the Liberator was able to attract trained foreign soldiers and some military supplies to aid him in the struggle to end Spanish rule in Gran Colombia.³

Bolívar's dream of a federation of Spanish American States was also frustrated. His prestige and forcefulness were sufficient to unite Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador in a short-lived Republic of Gran Colombia, an entity that broke apart before Bolívar's death. The Liberator also attempted in vain to promote a confederation of all Latin-American States, an idea that lay dormant until the creation

² Arthur P. Whitaker, The United States and South America. The Northern Republics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948).

³ Documentos de Cancillerías Europeas sobre la Independencia Venezolana (2 vols.; Caracas: Academia Nacional de Historia, 1962); J. Fred Rippey, Latin America, A Modern History (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp. 146, 150-155.

of the Pan American Union (PAU, later renamed the Organization of American States, in 1948).⁴

While these ambitious plans of Bolívar had to wait many years for at least a partial implementation--as in the joint merchant fleet of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador in 1947 or the creation of the PAU in 1889--the legacy of vague boundaries dating from the days of Independence and even earlier, from the Spanish colonization period, was to cause immediate and recurring friction between Venezuela and its neighbors.

The most serious, bitter, and prolonged boundary dispute has been with Great Britain over the joint frontier with British Guiana.⁵ The Dutch, the French, and the English attempted settlement and fought each other in that northern portion of South America. Since the Dutch and English

⁴O. C. Stoetzer, The Organization of American States (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), pp. 1-15.

⁵The literature on the Guayana-Venezuelan border dispute is voluminous. It includes Grover Cleveland, The Venezuelan Boundary Controversy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1913); Marcos Falcón Briceño, La Cuestión de Límites entre Venezuela y la Guayana Británica (Caracas: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1962); Venezuela, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Los Límites de Venezuela con la Guayana Británica (Caracas: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1962); Venezuela, Historia Oficial de la Discusión entre Venezuela y la Gran Bretaña sobre sus Límites en la Guayana (New York: Weiss, 1896); Venezuela, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, El Libro Amarillo (Caracas: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1894). It is important to note that British Guiana was renamed Guyana after the territory's 1966 independence. Do not confuse the country of Guyana with the Venezuelan region of Guayana where the Guayana Project is now under way.

plantations were located mostly on the east side of the Esequibo River, there was little contact with the Spanish, whose eastern outposts were near the mouths of the Orinoco, far to the west, although the Spanish claim, based on discovery and exploration, reached to the west bank of the Esequibo.

When in 1814 the Dutch ceded the western part of its Guiana territory to Great Britain, the British aggressively took advantage of Venezuela's weak position and the chaos following Independence. Their settlement was pushed westward and by 1835 the British, resting their claims on de facto occupation and control, had a German explorer, H. Schomburgk survey and mark a western boundary that gave British Guiana 4,920 square kilometers west of the Esequibo River. What Venezuelans claimed was a "falsified Schomburgk line" later gave the British 167,830 square kilometers west of the Esequibo by 1887.

Venezuelan protests in the meantime had resulted in a succession of alternative proposals but no agreement; and Great Britain refused to submit the matter to arbitration. After the discovery of gold and diamonds in the disputed area, disagreement led to an open break. In 1887 Venezuela severed diplomatic relations with Great Britain and made a strong appeal for the good offices of the United States to settle the question.

Between 1887 and 1897 Great Britain presented its maximum claims over the disputed territory. By this time

the Schomburgk line had been pushed further west and a total of 203,310 square kilometers west of the Esequibo were mapped as belonging to British Guiana. The northern terminus of the line rested on the eastern mouth of the Orinoco, giving the British a position of strategic control over that river.⁶

This aggressive expansionism by Great Britain touched off a series of incidents in which both parties claimed violations of their boundaries. In 1895 Venezuelan border guards arrested two minor British officials and charged them with violation of Venezuelan territory. Great Britain countered by threatening to send warships to protect her subjects and her interests. Public opinion was aroused, not only in the two countries directly involved, but also in the United States where a denunciation of the British meant satisfaction of jingoistic sentiment and votes. President Cleveland, in an address to Congress stated that it was America's duty under the Monroe Doctrine to determine the boundary and to resist British aggression beyond that line, even at the risk of war.

Fortunately, Great Britain was then so involved in competition with France and Germany in Africa and the Middle East that the British leaders were disposed to view the Guiana boundary question as a minor, if annoying, incident. Arbitration was agreed upon, and in 1899 the tribunal handed

⁶"La Línea Schomburgk en la Cuestión de Límites entre Venezuela y la Guayana Británica," Política, IV (March, 1966), 145-148; Herring, A History of Latin America, p. 799.

down a decision establishing a boundary that gave to Guiana 159,500 square kilometers west of the Esequibo, and Venezuela received control of the strategic area at the eastern mouth of the Orinoco.

Both sides accepted the decision, but Venezuelans have continued to feel that their rights were not well protected, especially since, having invited the Chief Justice of the United States to present their case, they were not represented on the tribunals by one of their own nationals. Furthermore, while the Orinoco was no longer threatened, Venezuela had in fact--by Schomburgk's own original line--lost over 150,000 square kilometers to Guiana between 1835 and the time of the award, in 1899.⁷

Acción Democrática has been a firm advocate of a revision of the 1899 award. A partisan editorial sums up AD's attitude toward the compromise--"there was no arbitration, only a political patchwork that was prejudicial to Venezuela. . . . The American judges, who were themselves forced to agree to the award, indicated that Great Britain had taken away an extensive and important territory to which she did not have the slightest right."⁸

In his speech on March 24, 1966, President Raúl Leoni declared himself the spokesman for and the executor of "a

⁷"Laudo Arbitral de 3 Octubre 1899 que Fijó Límites entre Venezuela y Guiana Británica," Documentos (January-March, 1962), pp. 401-407.

⁸"La Guayana Esequiba, Tierra Venezolana," Política, IV (March, 1966), 8-9.

firm but rational nationalism." In the same vein, his predecessor, Rómulo Betancourt, proclaimed during his 1958 electoral campaign that his policy toward the great powers would be always characterized for its "nationalistic firmness, without provoking arrogance."⁹ Both presidents acted in conformity with these definitions and their handling of the Guiana question is a good illustration of their firmness and rationality in issues that touch deeply the rising tide of Venezuelan nationalism.

All the Venezuelan governments between 1899 and 1958 had either conveniently forgotten the Guiana question or had simply used it as nationalistic bait to attract votes. No plans had been devised for a revision of the 1899 line, much less had there been any concerted effort to give back to Venezuela what appeared to be justly hers. Once in power, Betancourt called for detailed and systematic studies of the Guiana question. A number of international legal jurists were asked to devise a strategy to bring the 1899 line back to the discussion table. By the end of 1962 the AD government had concluded the first phase of its task--the compilation and classification of all historical data concerning the boundary dispute. With solid juridical and historical arguments, Venezuelan representatives to the

⁹Quoted in Boersner, "Guayana Esequiba," p. 21. Dr. Boersner has been an adviser to the Venezuelan foreign minister during the negotiations with Great Britain over the Guiana question. See also "Informe de la Cancillería Acerca de los Límites de Venezuela con la Guayana Británica," Documentos (January-March, 1962), pp. 407-408.

Twelfth General Assembly of the United Nations in November of 1962 were able to bring about an agreement with Great Britain to initiate a tripartite examination of all the documents relative to the Guiana question.¹⁰

A year later, the first conference took place in London, with the participation not only of Venezuela and Great Britain, but also of representatives from Guyana. The Venezuelan government had insisted on the presence of this third party as an insurance against a possible later claim by an independent Guyana that she could not abide by an agreement reached without her full knowledge and participation.

In the 1963 conversations Great Britain had assumed a firm position against the full reexamination of the 1899 award, but Venezuela began to arouse public sentiment at home. Teachers were asked to tell their classes "the full story" about the 1899 line of demarcation. Early in 1965 the government asked for the printing of a new map of Venezuela which showed the disputed area within the confines of the country. Stamps depicting such a map were issued and a Commission for the Recuperation of Guayana Esequiba was formed to further propagate the Venezuelan claims.¹¹

Throughout this campaign, the government kept pointing out that its arguments were with Great Britain,

¹⁰ Documentos (October-December, 1962), pp. 624-626, 713.

¹¹ Boersner, "Guayana Esequiba," pp. 21-26.

a power greater than Venezuela, and not with Guyana, a weaker power and one which deserved all of Venezuela's good will. This strategy proved very effective. Newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs in Venezuela kept the theme before the public. At the same time, Great Britain was beset with domestic economic troubles that made it more difficult for her to continue her "hard" line, especially due to the fact that her trade with Venezuela was particularly significant.

Between December of 1965 and February of 1966 this campaign was intensified. President Leoni expressed, in categorical terms, his determination not to compromise what he believed were Venezuela's just demands. The Venezuelan Congress and all the state legislatures issued pronouncements in a similar vein. The Colombian Congress expressed its solidarity with Venezuela, as did the Panamanian Congress and similar entities throughout the Americas.

As a result of this skillful and intensive campaign at home and abroad, the ministerial negotiations at Geneva were resumed in a changed atmosphere on February 15, 1966. The Venezuelan position remained firm in its basic demands but flexible in regard to the details; Great Britain, on the other hand, was now prepared to concede the wisdom of a reexamination of the 1899 agreement. A mixed commission was created and empowered to seek a solution within four years. Great Britain, Venezuela, and the representatives

from Guyana took part in this agreement, an agreement that envisaged the possible active role of the United Nations general secretariat in all the steps of the proceedings.¹²

While the preliminary agreement has been hailed at home and abroad,¹³ the outcome of these negotiations will probably remain in question for the next few years; and, in the meantime, some Venezuelans will likely criticize the government's decision to take the longer route of international consultation rather than solve the question, once and for all, by forcing its solution on the newly independent Guayana. On the other hand, the position taken by Presidents Betancourt and Leoni, the skillful public campaign for renegotiation, and the prospect of regaining lost territory have, for the time being, served as a rallying point for an outpouring of nationalistic sentiment throughout Venezuela.¹⁴

¹²Coverage of this campaign is extensive. We may cite here "Acuerdo de la Cámara de Diputados; 4 de Abril de 1962," Gaceta Oficial (April 6, 1962), p. 3; Ignacio Iribarren Borges, "La Cuestión de Límites entre Venezuela y la Guayana Británica" (Caracas: Radio and Television Speech, September 16, 1965) (Mimeographed); several articles in Venezuela Up-to-Date and Política and in the various Caracas dailies, especially in the AD-oriented La República; "Cómo Nació la Guayana Británica?" Revista de las Fuerzas Armadas de Venezuela [Caracas] (January-March, 1966), pp. 83-84; El Litigio de la Guayana (Caracas: Oficina Técnica Mindefensa, 1965), pp. 1-15.

¹³New York Times, February 2, 1966, p. 22.

¹⁴See Ignacio Iribarren Borges, "Reclamación de la Guayana Esequiba y el Acuerdo de Ginebra," Revista Nacional de Cultura [Caracas], XXVIII (March, 1966), 90-96.

The Guiana dispute was not probed as a part of the author's questionnaire,¹⁵ but it came up during conversations with Acción Democrática leaders and members in 1965 and 1966. Its mention seemed to indicate that the governmental campaign had been effective in reaching the people. One of those interviewed mentioned that, with the printing of a map of Venezuela showing the Esequibo region as part of the country, now "Great Britain knew it couldn't keep a stolen piece of land." An AD leader felt that the invitation for the United Nations to participate in the renegotiations showed Venezuela's good faith and fairness in the matter. When asked about the "rhetorical" chance of a negative finding, he admitted that it would hurt AD candidates, especially at the national level. As he put it, "the adeco campaign had raised high hopes; too many speeches had been made, too many people had waived flags for Guayana Esequiba to forget and accept a disappointing result."

Boundary disputes with Brazil have been resolved through amicable negotiations. Limits were defined in

¹⁵Infra, Appendix. It is interesting that at the time of the author's 1964 visit to Venezuela, the Guiana campaign had not fully gotten under way and therefore the question did not seem to be a crucial issue. It did not come up in the course of conversations in 1964--it did in the course of conversations held in 1965 and 1966.

agreements signed in 1859 and 1905, and much of the border has now been surveyed and marked by members of mixed commissions.

Negotiations with Colombia have been more prolonged and more involved.¹⁶ The principal controversy revolved about the source of a small stream, the Rio de Oro, which empties into Lake Maracaibo. This dispute and another over an area south of the Meta River and west of the Orinoco and its tributaries, led eventually to an agreement in 1881 to accept arbitration by the Spanish Crown. A decision was rendered in 1891 but it was not until 1932 that the boundary was marked. Until 1952, relations with Colombia continued to be complicated by the question of the ownership of a small group of unoccupied islands, the Los Monjes Archipelago, just off the Guajira Peninsula. In November of that year Colombia withdrew her claim in favor of Venezuela.

Since 1958 Venezuela has made a determined effort to align herself with her former Gran Colombian partners. Her extensive frontiers with Colombia, which so often in the past were a source of friction between the two countries, are now being thought of as a factor of integration rather than of separation. The change has been hailed as "radical, pregnant

¹⁶ Gordon Ireland, Boundaries, Possessions, and Conflicts in Latin America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp. 138-144, 206-219; Maria T. Pulido Santana, La Diplomacia en Venezuela; Contiendas Civiles y Reclamaciones Internacionales (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1963), pp. 1-157.

of hopeful results."¹⁷ This move toward new regional trade and political ties was one of the underlying currents in the August, 1966, meeting in Bogotá of the Presidents of Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, and the presidential delegates from Peru and Ecuador. While economic questions were uppermost on the meeting's agenda, broader political questions were not ignored and the final communiqué urged a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.¹⁸

A result of the 1966 Bogotá meeting was the formation of the Andean Development Corporation for which Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela signed an agreement to set up a \$100 million fund to speed their economic integration. The preamble to the agreement stated that the signatories were "animated by a mutual desire to bring about, in the shortest time, the economic integration of their countries in order to accelerate the social and economic development of their people." Reflecting the Venezuelan leadership in pushing for the agreement, the new supranational agency will have its headquarters in Caracas.¹⁹

¹⁷ Germán Arciniegas, "La Sorpresa de un Cambio Radical," El Caribe [Santo Domingo, D.R.] (August 6, 1966), p. 15-A. See also "La Frontera como Factor de Integración (El Caso Colombo-Venezolano)," Boletín de la Economía y Finanzas del Banco de Venezuela, S.A. [Caracas], VI (January, 1965), 9-11; Eduardo Frei, "El Deseo de Unir," Política, V (August, 1966), 129-133.

¹⁸ "Five Years of the Alliance," New York Times (August 18, 1966), p. 32.

¹⁹ New York Times, February 10, 1968, p. 7.

A more immediate result of the 1966 Bogotá meeting was the inauguration of a joint Colombian-Venezuelan Chamber of Commerce by Presidents Leoni and Carlos Lleras Restrepo. The presidents took advantage of the occasion to declare that their countries, neighbors in South America's northern tier and commonly united in the days of Simón Bolívar, were taking the initial steps toward limited integration of their economies. The Bogotá Declaration included an immediate action program pinpointing eight main areas for joint industrial development: metallurgy, chemicals and petrochemicals, fertilizers, food, electronics, timber, cellulose, and manufactured metal products. Officials of both countries expressed the desire to draw Ecuador into this grouping.²⁰

The inauguration of the Colombian-Venezuelan Chamber of Commerce marked one more step in the economic integration of the two countries. An agreement had been signed in June, 1964, for the joint development of their borderlands. This was the outcome, in turn, of a meeting held in August, 1963, between Presidents Betancourt and Valencia of Colombia in San Cristóbal, near the Colombian border.²¹ The 1964 agreement was based on the report of a mixed commission of

²⁰ Juan de Onís, "Latins Promote New Trade Ties," New York Times (August 16, 1966), p. 12; "La Declaración de Bogotá; Documento," Política, V (August, 1966), 107-117.

²¹ "Integración Fronteriza Colombo-Venezolana," Comercio Exterior de Venezuela [Caracas], III (May, 1964), 6.

the two countries and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).²² It will affect 1,670,000 people living on 56,000 square miles of territory along the 1,380 mile long frontier. The zone includes the arid Goajira peninsula in the north, an expanse of fertile land in eastern Zulia, the mountainous Andes region in the center, and the plains in the south.

The objective of the project is to foster the economic integration that has been taking place in the border area as a natural effect of the common characteristics of the people and the land. Except for the small Goajiro and Motilón Indian tribes in the north, the population on both sides of the border come from a common stock, and the economies of the neighboring lands have grown at the same level. The goal is to improve the social and economic conditions of both peoples by giving them the means to work together.

It is interesting to point out that the 1964 agreement, signed by the Presidents of Venezuela and of Colombia, was also signed by the President of the IADB. He stated that the Bank was interested in the project because this was one of the few areas in Latin America where economic and social integration already existed to a certain extent and the new efforts to push this integration further, if successful,

²²"Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo Presenta Informe sobre Integración Fronteriza Colombo-Venezolana," Boletín de la Cámara de Comercio de Caracas, XLII (June, 1964), 17277-17280. See also Venezuela, Dirección de Comercio Exterior y Consulados, Integración Económica de la Zona Fronteriza Colombo-Venezuela (Caracas, 1965), pp. 1-49.

could serve as a model for other Latin-American countries.²³ A recent "Act of San Cristóbal" underlined the goal of economic and social integration of the two countries by pledging to provide the "basis for interrelations between professional, cultural, scientific, and social groups" in Venezuela and Colombia.²⁴

Thus in the Guiana case, the AD governments of Betancourt and Leoni have used an old dispute as a means of rallying nationalistic sentiment. The appeal to the United Nations and to international law, furthermore, meant that Venezuela would reap not only national gains but international prestige as well. In the Colombian-Venezuelan case, the two AD Presidents had sought to view the extensive borders not as possible sources of friction but as a means towards greater economic and political integration between the two countries involved. In the Guiana case as in the Colombian-Venezuelan case, the boundaries posed old, difficult questions, but the solutions attempted certainly represented new approaches.

The Economics of Venezuela's Foreign Relations

Just as boundary questions have assumed a new-- and different--aspect in recent years, so has the country's

²³"Economic Integration: Venezuela-Colombia," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Fall, 1964), 8.

²⁴"Declaración de San Cristóbal," El Nacional (January 8, 1967), p. D-7.

foreign trade become a crucial factor not only in the expanding total economy--and the efforts to diversify it--but also in foreign affairs as well. This is not surprising if one keeps in mind that exports in any typical recent year amount to approximately half the total national income. Petroleum and iron exports alone account for about 90% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Also of great importance is the presence in Venezuela of about \$6 billion in foreign investments, of which two-thirds comes from the U.S. and the rest almost exclusively from the Netherlands and Great Britain. About 90% of the foreign investment is concentrated in the extractive industries of petroleum and mining, where investment is still predominantly of foreign origin.²⁵ Foreign trade has made the bolívar a strong currency--almost a rarity in Latin America--and it has also given Venezuela leverage for dealing with certain countries, as in the case of the (formerly British) Guiana dispute.

Petroleum and its derivatives account for nearly 90% by value of total exports and, despite increased government programs of development and diversification of exports, the country is still basically dependent on the export of petroleum. Although petroleum is expected to continue as the major source of foreign exchange for some years to come. its position relative to the country's total trade will

²⁵ Tomás Enrique Carrillo Batalla, La Economía del Comercio Internacional de Venezuela (Caracas: Editorial Mundo Económico, 1963).

decline with the development of other sectors of the economy. Ironically, perhaps, the petroleum revenues largely provide the financing behind this industrial diversification program.²⁶

In contrast to most countries in Latin America, Venezuela has maintained a favorable balance of trade and her exports far outstrip her imports. Though her external commerce has steadily grown since the 1920's, with the commercial exploitation of petroleum, it is the last decade (and incidentally the years covered by both the AD trienio and the Betancourt-Leoni governments) that shows the most spectacular gains. While imports have maintained relative stability, the exports have nearly doubled as shown in Table 18.

The importation of consumer goods has decreased; and the days when even eggs had to come from Miami, as during the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, are now part of history.²⁷ Import of capital goods has increased--and this again has been made possible in great measure by the exchange earned through petroleum. The country is gradually becoming able to supply many of its domestic foodstuff needs and it is believed that the agrarian reform program is positively helping in this area.²⁸

²⁶ Supra, chap. VIII; U.S. Department of Commerce, Principal Manufacturing Industries in Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), especially pp. 1-3.

²⁷ Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 223-250.

²⁸ Supra, chap. VI.

TABLE 18

EXTERNAL COMMERCE OF VENEZUELA (1936-1965)^a

Year	Exports		Imports		Commercial Balance	
	Tm Vol.	Million Bs	Tm Vol.	Million Bs	(million Bs)	Active Passive
1936	23.43	788.5	0.36	211.6	576.9	---
1940	26.81	860.9	0.58	311.2	549.7	---
1945	45.48	1,107.9	0.87	804.9	303.0	---
1948	67.53	3,484.4	2.12	2,809.8	674.6	---
1955	114.55	6,277.7	2.20	3,165.4	3,112.3	---
1958	143.4	7,770.6	3.00	4,798.7	2,971.9	---
1962	171.2	8,688.6	2.30	3,934.0	4,754.0	---
1965	208.1	11,034.2	2.50	4,304.0	6,730.2	---

^aSource: Marrero, *Venezuela y Sus Recursos*, p. 582; Letter from F. J. Lara, Director, Institute of Information and Culture, Embassy of Venezuela, Washington, D.C., January 31, 1967.

Until 1957 the country maintained a balance of payments equilibrium and accumulated large reserves of foreign exchange; but between 1958 and 1961 there was heavy pressure on the balance of payments, and foreign exchange reserves dwindled to practically nothing. There was an exodus of capital from the country caused by the end of the petroleum boom after the Suez crisis was settled, by restrictive import quotas imposed by the U.S., by political uncertainty over the prospects of Betancourt being able to finish his term of office, by budget deficits incurred in part for extensive

social welfare programs, by lack of confidence on the part of the business community, and by excess liquidity.

Betancourt was forced to impose exchange controls that resulted in multiple exchange rates. It was not until 1962 that the highly favorable balance of payments was restored and Venezuela again piled up a healthy surplus of foreign reserves.²⁹

For the next few years Venezuela enjoyed such an enviable balance of payments position that she was able to pay ahead of schedule a loan from the U.S.³⁰ Another serious flight of capital occurred in the second half of 1966. Again it jolted Venezuela's economy and brought about a retrenchment in certain government programs--as well as a forced postponement in Venezuela's claims against the foreign oil companies.³¹ The transfer abroad of an estimated \$250 million, which coincided with a worldwide shortage of credit, affected particularly the smaller and undercapitalized manufacturing and retailing companies. The government placed the blame for the flight of capital and the economic slowdown on the political opposition, but Venezuelan businessmen blamed attempts

²⁹ Mustafa F. Hassan, "Capital Flight: Venezuela 1958-1960," Inter-American Economic Affairs, XVII (Autumn, 1963), 53-73.

³⁰ Venezuela's favorable exchange rate, her rapid economic growth and diversification, as well as the "strength" of the bolivar made her the first prospective lender in the Latin-American region; Miami Herald, August 15, 1965, p. 34-C; Carlos Conde, "La Alianza para el Progreso Da Fin a Ayuda a Venezuela," El Caribe [Santo Domingo, D.R.] (September 16, 1967), p. 6-A.

³¹ New York Times, January 24, 1967, p. 56.

to raise taxes for pork-barrel projects, which they claimed would be terminated just in time for the 1968 electoral campaign. The foreign oil companies were more willing than their Venezuelan counterparts to see some merit in the government proposals.³²

Whatever might have been the causes of the economic retrenchment, it was quickly brought to a halt by the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and the subsequent curtailment of oil shipments from the Middle East. It may seem strange but, together with Israel, Venezuela profited immensely from the war. Nasser's Arab allies stopped sending petroleum to the U.S. and to West Europe, and the Suez Canal was blocked. Consequently there was heavier dependence on Venezuela's oil output, which jumped more than 10% in 1967.³³

Instability in the Middle East was also greatly responsible for an unexpected capital investment program on the part of the oil companies. Thus, when stringent air pollution measures were adopted in the United States, Venezuelan government circles were at first dismayed. It seemed as though the oil companies would prefer to invest in the "purer" Middle Eastern oil and that Venezuela would lose its

³²"All Concerned Satisfied with Oil Settlement," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Fall, 1966), 7; "Venezuela Oil," Economist [London], CCXXI (October 15, 1966), 283; Juan Jorge Walte, "Venezuela's Proposed Tax Reform Makes Tempers Flare," Grand Rapids Press (August 16, 1966), p. 9.

³³C. L. Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: Oil for the Lamps of Progress," New York Times (September 29, 1967), p. 46.

U.S. fuel oil market, which takes about one million of that country's 3.5 million-barrel-a-day production.³⁴ The unreliability of the Middle Eastern producers, however, prompted the oil industry to reverse itself and to schedule investments of \$200 million at a time when President Johnson was urging curtailment of overseas investments. All major companies in Venezuela have begun expansion programs in the construction of plants to reduce the sulphur content of fuel oil to levels acceptable to the U.S. market.³⁵

The Venezuela government, for its part, has continued and expanded its efforts to promote foreign investment as well as to see that the foreign investment is equitably and smoothly integrated with local capital.³⁶ The government has assured foreign investors equal treatment with domestic investors, provided that foreign capital contributes to the development of the country and does not displace domestic capital. Furthermore, it favors the association of domestic and foreign capital in joint enterprises.³⁷

³⁴Carlos Conde, "Estiman Discriminatoria Política sobre Petróleo," El Caribe [Santo Domingo, D.R.] (February 12, 1967), p. 6-A.

³⁵"U.S. Curbs on Pollution Held Boon to Venezuela," New York Times (January 28, 1968), sec. 3, p. 1.

³⁶New York Times, January 22, 1968, p. 65.

³⁷Supra, chap. VIII; Manuel R. Angulo, "Comments on the Status of Foreign Business Corporation under the Commercial Codes of Argentina and Venezuela," Inter-American Law Review, IV (July-December, 1962), 159-185.

Various organizations dealing with some aspects of foreign trade and foreign investment have been established in recent years, more particularly since AD has been in control of the Venezuelan executive and has attempted to implement its programmatic goals in this area. The Council of Foreign Commerce (Consejo de Comercio Exterior), representing both the public and the private sector, is charged with studying the major aspects of Venezuela's commercial policy and with presenting recommendations to the government. The Venezuelan Association of Exporters (Asociación Venezolana de Exportadores) was formed in 1962 as part of the government's efforts to develop foreign markets for a growing list of Venezuelan products. Since 1963 the CVF (Corporación Venezolana de Fomento) has evolved plans to assist in the financing of exports. One plan calls for the extension of credit for the processing of raw materials and the other for refinancing payment for exported products. It has also worked on developing commercial information and providing services and technical assistance to industries interested in exportation.³⁸

Betancourt and Leoni have supported the Latin American Coffee Agreement of 1958 and 1959 and its more

³⁸See, for example, Venezuela, Dirección de Comercio Exterior y Consulados, Intercambio Comercial entre Venezuela y los Países Suramericanos (Caracas: Dirección de Comercio Exterior y Consulados, 1963), pp. 1-59; "Nueva Política de Exportación," Mundo Económico [Caracas] (May, 1963), p. 10.

widely based successor, the International Coffee Agreement.³⁹ But of all these efforts, organizations, and agreements to further foreign trade and investment, none are as important to Venezuela as her participation with other oil rich countries in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and her entry in the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA).

The Venezuelan objective in forming a united front, back in 1960, with the Arab countries was also to maintain the price of the product they all export, petroleum. Betancourt's initiative was largely responsible for the formation of the OPEC and a similar organization for iron-exporting nations has been under consideration.⁴⁰

The OPEC had as its "principal objective . . . the unification of the petroleum policies of the member countries and the determination of the best means of safeguarding the individual and collective interests of the member countries."⁴¹ The resolutions of the first OPEC conference, held in Baghdad

³⁹Simon G. Hanson, "The International Coffee Agreement," Inter-American Economic Affairs, XVII (Autumn, 1963), 75-94.

⁴⁰Venezuela, Secretaría General de la Presidencia de la República, Venezuela and OPEC (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1961); Venezuela, Ministerio de Minas e Hidrocarburos, Venezuela and OPEC; Documents, Speeches, and Venezuelan and World Views Relating to the Antecedents and Creation of the OPEC (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1961), pp. 1-144.

⁴¹Article IV, Resolution No. 2 of Baghdad Conference, published in OPEC: Organización de Países Exportadores de Petróleo (Caracas: OPEC, 1961), p. 14.

with the presence of Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela in September, 1960, were ratified by the Venezuelan Congress on May 22 of the following year. Meanwhile, the second conference, held in Caracas in January of 1961, adopted further resolutions, admitted Qatar as a member, and established a permanent headquarters for the OPEC in Geneva. Libya and Indonesia later also entered the Organization.⁴²

OPEC, an ambitious undertaking, has encountered non-committal reception from the oil companies themselves. Of greater importance as a possible embarrassment to OPEC's stated objectives is the fact that the Soviet Union and the other nonmember Eastern European producers can flood the markets with oil at prices below those set by OPEC.⁴³ Both Betancourt and Leoni have stimulated discussion of this problem with the Russian leaders but so far their efforts have proved inconclusive. Another difficulty has been the tendency for the oil companies to install refineries in the consumer countries rather than in the producing countries,

⁴² Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso, "Organización de Países Exportadores de Petróleo (OPEP)," Política, IV (January, 1966), 7-19. Pérez Alfonso is an internationally recognized authority on petroleum questions. Minister of Mines and Petroleum during the Betancourt Administration, he is considered the principal architect of Acción Democrática's oil policy.

⁴³ There are those who disagree with this view (see, for example, Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, p. 231), and argue that the Russian oil is destined for markets not open to Venezuela or commercially desirable to her. See also Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso, "El Petróleo Ruso no es una Amenaza para Venezuela," Mundo Económico (September, 1961), pp. 7-10; and Documentos (April-June, 1961), p. 714.

such as Venezuela. Finally, the basic problem facing OPEC--and admittedly outside its control--has been the low price of petroleum, at its lowest point between 1953 and 1966. This problem receded after 1966--but again, the increase in the oil price had occurred completely independent of OPEC's efforts.⁴⁴

While Venezuela pioneered in the formation of OPEC and has probably been its most active member, its attitude toward the so-called Latin American Common Market has been far from unqualified support.

Venezuela finally joined the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) late in 1966 and pledged its active participation beginning in January, 1967.⁴⁵ Formed in 1960, LAFTA already had several participating countries--Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil among them. The trade among the LAFTA countries was estimated to reach \$800 million in 1965 or 5% of the total Latin-American trade. But the trade involved had been largely traditional exchange--Argentine wheat for Brazilian coffee, or Peruvian sugar for Chilean food-stuffs. Due to continuing high tariff walls, only minor expansion has been made in the sale of industrial products

⁴⁴"Pierden la Industria de Refinación Los Países Productores de Petróleo," El Nacional (January 22, 1967), pp. C-1, C-13.

⁴⁵Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Fall, 1966), 5. By the time Venezuela became a full member of LAFTA only Bolivia, of the South American countries, remained outside that group.

among the Latin countries.⁴⁶

Venezuela has several times postponed her entrance into LAFTA, and even as she prepared to become a full member, a great deal of hesitation was still apparent. Ever since the beginning of the negotiations that ultimately led to the signing of the Treaty of Montevideo that formalized LAFTA in 1960, successive Venezuelan governments were faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, Betancourt, Leoni, and the AD had often stressed the need for closer political and economic ties in the Hemisphere.⁴⁷ They were also aware of the opportunities for accelerated growth that participation in a scheme of regional integration might offer to their country. On the other hand, all realized that Venezuela, a country with very high labor costs, might be placed at a disadvantage compared with other Latin-American countries.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ For good recent studies of LAFTA see Sidney Dell, A Latin American Common Market? (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), and Miguel S. Wiomczek (ed.), Integración de América Latina (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1964). For Venezuela's relations with LAFTA, see Braulio Jatar Dotti, "Adhesión de Venezuela a la ALALC," Economía y Administración [Maracaibo], V (January-March, 1966), 166-175, and Aaron Segal, "Venezuela and LAFTA," Caribbean Studies, VI (January, 1967), 37-59.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Betancourt, Hacia América Latina Democrática e Integrada, *passim*.

⁴⁸ The explanation for the high cost structure of the Venezuela economy is found in the fact that the level of industrial wages is determined essentially by the productivity of the petroleum and iron ore sectors. These sectors are so productive as to be able to pay relatively high wages and this tends to influence the wage levels of those sectors whose productivity is much lower. Consequently, while wage costs per unit of output might be low in the sectors producing

An even more complex barrier to participation in LAFTA has been the fact that the Venezuelan economy is structurally distinct from that of most Latin-American countries, and Venezuelans consider that their economic problems and opportunities differ fundamentally from those of their neighbors. Venezuela, with a population of around 9 million has the highest per capita income in Latin America, a volume of exports 45% greater than Brazil, which is the second largest exporter in Latin America, a persistently favorable balance of trade, and foreign exchange reserves greater than any other Latin-American country. Venezuela is the most urbanized country in Latin America, is able to engage in capital-intensive industrialization and mechanization of agriculture, and represents the largest single internal market in Latin America for imported capital equipment and consumer durables.⁴⁹

Many groups within Venezuela, for these very reasons, were less than eager to embrace LAFTA. As a Bank of Venezuela spokesman pointed out in 1960,

Any common market . . . will leave us producing nothing but petroleum and iron ore, and importing everything else. Our textiles cannot compete with Brazilian textiles, our coffee cannot compete with Colombian coffee, and our meat cannot compete with Uruguayan meat. For us a free trade area is utopian at the present time.⁵⁰

petroleum and iron ore, they are very high elsewhere. This has meant that Venezuela can very well find herself in an inferior competitive position in relation to other LAFTA countries except for petroleum and iron.

⁴⁹Charles W. Anderson, Politics and Economic Change in Latin America (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1957), pp. 281-289.

⁵⁰Quoted in Dell, A Latin American Common Market? p. 48.

As late as the fall of 1963, the outgoing Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Marcos Falcón-Briceño pointed out that Betancourt had created a Commission in 1962 to study the economic integration of Latin America and that, although his country viewed "with interest the growth of LAFTA, . . . for Venezuela to join [it] calls for a decision that would not only bind her to comply with the maximum commitments set forth in the Treaty of Montevideo, but also to adopt new criteria in the overall economic policy of the nation."⁵¹

For these reasons, the government of Betancourt took the view that participating in a common market would not be possible without special treatment that would allow for the particular circumstances in which Venezuela found herself. Because of the exceptional gap in productivity between the petroleum and iron sectors and the rest of her economy, Venezuela had been maintaining an exchange rate overvalued in terms of almost every other export except those two. Further, since most of her trade was with the U.S. and Europe, Venezuela could hardly be expected to restructure her entire economy to suit the other Latin-American countries, with whom she maintains little trade.⁵² This remained the situation

⁵¹"Minister Tells U.N. Delegates About Venezuela," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Fall, 1963), 5.

⁵²For a fuller discussion of these problems, see Dell, A Latin American Common Market? pp. 47-49. The LAFTA, except for special escape clauses for the small members just beginning industrial development, is based on the "most favored nation" concept, requiring area-wide tariff concessions, and not restricted favors between groups of member countries. To complicate Venezuela's position, one must remember that she is also now very interested in promoting

throughout the Betancourt administration.

The Betancourt government's reluctance to enter LAFTA was compounded by the lack of any immediate impelling motive. Thus, while virtually every LAFTA member except Mexico experienced a major economic crisis, often with political implications, Venezuela seemed free of the pressures which had prompted other countries to turn to LAFTA as a possible salvation for economic ills. The recession in the early years of the Betancourt administration had been relatively mild, trade balances continued to be favorable, per capita income increases were greater than population growth, foreign reserves grew, and inflation was kept under control.

Outside the government executive, there was indifference and hostility to participation in LAFTA. The political parties, the military, and public opinion were largely indifferent to LAFTA. In the words of Segal,

The issues involved were too complex, the consequences too difficult to determine and too remote from popular concerns to involve large segments of the public. The government, lacking a majority in parliament, would have to build its own more powerful coalition of interests and/or win over some of the opposition in order to achieve LAFTA entry.⁵³

The opposition to LAFTA coalesced around FEDECAMARAS. There, Venezuelan industrialists, particularly in textiles and

and participating in "subregional groupings," referred to earlier in this chapter. Such groups bring new dimensions but also new problems for regional integration in the LAFTA-model. See Braulio Jatar Dotti, "Los Instrumentos de Integración Económica en Latinoamérica," Política, V (June, 1966), 31-51.

⁵³Segal, "Venezuela and LAFTA," p. 40.

foodstuffs, and Venezuelan merchants with exclusive franchises for the import of North American or European goods voiced their deep concern over possible price competition from LAFTA imports. Venezuelan bankers feared that entry into LAFTA would result in inflation and the flooding of Venezuela with "soft" or nonconvertible currencies from other Latin-American countries.

This atmosphere of indifference and hostility began to undergo a marked change soon after the inauguration of President Leoni. The attention given by Leoni to the industrial diversification of Venezuela and his deep interest in furthering economic and political ties within the Hemisphere made him a more likely candidate than Betancourt to push more firmly for the country's entry into LAFTA. He did so firmly--but also very cautiously. Recognizing the very real reservations against such an entry by the Venezuelan private business sector, Leoni went out of his way to allay their fears and to promise their full participation in all the discussions. He promised that entry would not take place without taking into consideration business objections and that only conditionally would Venezuela enter LAFTA, in any case. Speaking to the Twentieth Assembly of FEDECAMARAS in June, 1964, Leoni clarified his position:

The Venezuelan Government believes that joining the Free Trade Zone, first stage of a future Latin American Common Market, may be effected without disturbing the nation's economy. . . . I want . . . to announce the Government's decision to join the Association within a few months. I want also to announce the creation of a special commission of government officials and private individuals, to prepare the

basis for the negotiations to be conducted, so that the resulting agreements will strengthen the trade with other member countries of LAFTA on mutually profitable conditions.⁵⁴

Leoni's attempt to obtain the private investors' approval of his plans to enter LAFTA did not meet with immediate success.⁵⁵ Consultations between the government and business leaders went on for several months. In the meantime, a barrage of articles explaining LAFTA and the benefits to be derived from participating in it appeared in the press--in the AD literature,⁵⁶ in business journals,⁵⁷ and in government publications.⁵⁸ Asociación Pro-Venezuela seemed to favor entry so long as the country obtained some concessions from LAFTA;⁵⁹ but as late as October, 1965, the

⁵⁴"President Announces New Plans to Aid Economy," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Fall, 1964), 3.

⁵⁵FEDECAMARAS initial reaction was the issuance of a critical pamphlet, FEDECAMARAS, FEDECAMARAS ante la ALALC (Caracas: FEDECAMARAS, October, 1965). It argued that the LAFTA experience had not contributed to the economic development of Latin America and that Venezuelan industry would be particularly damaged by the ruinous competition from other countries in which labor costs were considerably lower than Venezuela's.

⁵⁶Several issues of Política carried articles on this topic throughout 1965-1966.

⁵⁷See "El Funcionamiento del Comercio entre los Países de la ALALC," Producción [Caracas] (October-November, 1964), pp. 24-28.

⁵⁸Eddie Morales Crespo, "Venezuela y la Integración Latino-Americana," Cuadernos de la CVF, I (April-June, 1964), 17-27.

⁵⁹Asociación Pro-Venezuela, "Consideraciones sobre el Ingreso de Venezuela a la ALALC," Cuadernos de la CVF, I (April-June, 1964), 165-194.

Board of Directors of FEDECAMARAS declared that an unconditional entry into LAFTA would be highly prejudicial and that their organization would therefore have to oppose it.⁶⁰ The Venezuelan government apparently concurred with the view that concessions were essential; and negotiations between Venezuela and LAFTA continued to take place, usually with the presence of the Foreign Minister.⁶¹

If, on the one hand, the government wanted to implement the Bolivarian (and adeco) ideal of greater political and economic integration within the Latin-American bloc, it also perceived the necessity of balancing that ideal against the practical necessity of protecting many of its infant industries from the competition of cheaper exports from other countries. The government was likewise interested in supplying a greater share of the Latin-American iron and petroleum needs. The overall planning agency, CORDIPLAN, was again called upon to study specific cases of Venezuelan industries that might be affected by entry into LAFTA.⁶²

⁶⁰"Debe Ser Condicionado el Engreso en la ALALC," El Nacional (October 10, 1965), p. A-1. It is interesting to point out that reportedly FEDECAMARAS' own economic advisor was in favor of LAFTA.

⁶¹"Convocada Reunión Urgente de la Comisión de la ALALC por el Canciller," El Nacional (November 27, 1966), p. A-1.

⁶²See, for example, Oficina de Coordinación y Planificación, Comisión de Estudios sobre la Integración Económica Latinoamericana, "Informe Preliminar sobre la Industria Automotriz," Cuadernos de la CVF, I (April-June, 1964), 119-142.

A number of young economists in and out of CORDIPLAN were frankly in favor of LAFTA and used economic arguments in their attempt to convince FEDECAMARAS elements of the advantages that would accrue from integration. Many of these economists were on the staffs of several autonomous state-owned corporations and they had a continuing chance to present their case in dealing with Venezuelan entrepreneurs who depended on these state corporations for some of their transactions. Support came also from the Ministry of Finance, certain labor leaders, and a few interested politicians in the two major parties, Acción Democrática and the COPEI.⁶³ Although the United States government mildly favored Venezuelan entry, all sources agree that its influence on the eventual decision was minimal.

Among those groups in favor of entry into LAFTA was Venezuela's well-organized trade union movement, in itself a crucial mainstay of AD and of the Leoni government. The severe shortage of skilled labor, which has facilitated labor mobility in Venezuela, also eased any trade union qualms about the unemployment that might result from increased LAFTA imports. The Secretary General of the CTV attended the UN Conference on Trade and Development in 1964 and returned a

⁶³The AD has enjoyed close relations with similar postwar democratic Left parties in Latin America and is in principle committed to the emergence of a Latin-American regional consciousness. The copeyanos have been closely associated with the Chilean Christian Democrats and have endorsed President Eduardo Frei's proposals to accelerate Latin-American integration.

strong supporter of LAFTA. Through his efforts, the Venezuelan unions have taken the lead in promoting an organization of a new Latin-American regional trade union organization which will be linked to LAFTA.⁶⁴ Trade union backing for LAFTA further helped the government to take the political risk of confronting FEDECAMARAS' initial hostility to integration.

Those sectors of the business community that agreed with the government's position toward LAFTA were expanded when developments within LAFTA itself made satisfaction of some of Venezuela's conditions possible. There had been, from the early days of LAFTA, a loose alliance between the smallest members, Paraguay and Ecuador, and the largest members, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. These countries objected to any flexibility that might make it possible for Venezuela to enter LAFTA. The medium-sized countries--Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Uruguay--had been inclined towards a flexible approach for they, like Venezuela, were in a good competitive position in certain products and not in others. When Ecuador was added to this group, a more sympathetic view of Venezuela's position became possible within LAFTA itself. At the same time, Chile, under President Eduardo Frei, was becoming very active in strengthening the relations between his country and Venezuela;⁶⁵ and the same became also true in

⁶⁴Braulio Jatar Dotti, "Los Trabajadores en América Latina y el Mercado Común Latinoamericano," Política, VI (October, 1967), 11-34; Francisco A. Perdomo Moreno, "Notas Económicas," Política, VI (September, 1967), 79-83.

⁶⁵"Perspectivas de Intercambio Chileno-Venezolano,"

the cases of Colombia and Peru. For their part, the major countries were becoming divided into two groups--Mexico, which could indeed profitably maintain export-import relations with Venezuela, stood apart from Brazil and Argentina, both of which did not manifest great interest either in considering Venezuela's peculiar position or in furthering their trade with her. Their position grew harder as Venezuela severed diplomatic relations with them on the basis of the Betancourt Doctrine vis-à-vis military coups. In this new situation, the overall chances of more flexibility and of more sympathy toward Venezuela's entry into LAFTA became possible.⁶⁶ With this in mind, it is possible to say that in the LAFTA case, Venezuela's entry was probably the result of a combination of several factors, among them the government's efforts to bring the business community's views into all the negotiating stages, the AD- Presidents' desire to pioneer greater economic and political integration within the Hemisphere, and LAFTA's own change of position to one more flexible and understanding of Venezuela's situation.

La República (October 6, 1965), p. 6. It is interesting to point out that in the conversations between Chile and Venezuela both government and business leaders, not necessarily adecos, took part.

⁶⁶"Venezuela en la ALALC," Política, V (November, 1966), 5-10; Jorge Medina C., "Argentina y Uruguay en las Antípodas Políticas," Política, V (November, 1966), 105-110.

The fact that Venezuela delayed so long its entry in LAFTA may actually prove to Venezuela's advantage. In order to win over the business community, a number of commissions and organizations were established with the specific task of creating a link between government and the private sector in questions relating to trade. Studies were undertaken with the specific goal of envisaging and avoiding problems that might arise once Venezuela entered LAFTA. Whenever deemed necessary, new governmental and private agencies emerged to handle the unavoidable problems as well as to help in the smooth integration of Venezuelan and LAFTA interests. Thus, perhaps ironically, the prolonged debate on entry enabled Venezuela to establish an impressive national organization for LAFTA affairs which could be of considerable use later. The irony lies in that LAFTA's original members did not have the same need for extensive discussion, and consultation to rally support for LAFTA and are in some respects not as internally well organized to take advantage of LAFTA as is Venezuela.⁶⁷

Venezuela and the Inter-American System

It was the great Venezuelan patriot and liberator, Bolívar who first proposed the idea of Hemispheric cooperation which was to culminate in the Pan American Conferences which led to the formation, first, of the Pan American Union in 1889 and, eventually, of the Organization of

⁶⁷ Segal, "Venezuela and LAFTA," pp. 44-51.

American States (OAS) in 1948. At the first Conference, held in Panama City in 1826, Venezuela, then a part of Gran Colombia, was represented. In the next two conferences, held in 1847 in Lima and in 1856 in Santiago, Chile, respectively, Venezuela and many other Latin-American states were absent. However, starting with the first conference called by the United States in Washington, D.C., Venezuela, except for one occasion in 1906, has attended regularly. It has taken a full, if cautious, part in the development of the policies, acts, and charters by which the OAS seeks to promote inter-American peace and friendship, mutual defense against aggression, and economic, social, and cultural progress in the American region.

In furtherance of these purposes, Venezuela supports and participates in the several subsidiary councils and specialized organizations of the OAS, such as its Economic and Social, Cultural, Peace and Juristic Councils, and its organizations concerned with agriculture, health, women's, children's and other affairs. Along with other Hemisphere nations, it joined in 1942 the Inter-American Defense Board which, like the Pan American Union itself, was absorbed into the OAS in 1948.⁶⁸

In spite of its historical ties with the OAS,

⁶⁸ For a study of the OAS from the perspective of recent events, see John C. Dreier, The Organization of American States and the Hemisphere Crisis (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

Venezuela did not become deeply involved in questions affecting the inter-American system until the fall of Pérez Jiménez and the inauguration of an Acción Democrática government in 1959. The traumatic experiences of many adecos during the decade of dictatorship made them champions of democracy for all Latin America and sworn enemies of all forms of coups to unseat duly elected governments.⁶⁹

This attitude, in turn, has been reflected in Venezuela's pressures, within and without the OAS, toward the rejection and isolation of all those Latin-American governments that have come to power by means other than the ballot box. Thus, Venezuela withheld recognition of regimes which seized power by unconstitutional means in Peru in 1962; Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala in 1963; Brazil and Bolivia in 1964; and Argentina in 1966. This nonrecognition policy, better known as the Betancourt Doctrine, is simply a modern version of the Tovar Doctrine proclaimed by an Argentine decades ago. The Doctrine was applied during the AD trienio and has been adhered to by both Betancourt and Leoni governments, even on those occasions when the immediate practical repercussions--as with Brazil in

⁶⁹ See, for example, Rómulo Betancourt, "America no Puede Vivir sin Justicia y sin Libertad," Repertorio Americano, XXIX (November, 1948), 209-215; Rómulo Betancourt, "Panorama in Sombre Colors," The Nation, CLXIX (July 30, 1949), 101-104; "La Opinión Continental Frente a la Conferencia Interamericana," Cuadernos Americanos [Mexico], XII (September-October, 1953), 7-36; Luis Lander, "La Doctrina Venezolana de Acción Democrática," pp. 20-39.

1964--were unfavorable to Venezuela from the strictly commercial point of view.⁷⁰

The fact that Betancourt himself never claimed to have been the Doctrine's originator has not diminished its prestige in the party literature. Other Venezuelan political parties besides AD have also tacitly or openly embraced the Doctrine,⁷¹ and this makes unlikely its complete abandonment at the present time.

The Betancourt Doctrine's apparent acceptance at home has not been matched by a similar acceptance abroad. It has been viewed by some countries as an attempt by Venezuela to "interfere" in the domestic politics of sister nations. More importantly, it has failed to gain enough support from other Latin-American countries to make it effective as a tool of democracy within the inter-American system. Finally, the evident increase in the number of de facto regimes in the last few years--some of them "constitutionally" succeeded by handpicked governments, as in

⁷⁰ The Betancourt Doctrine has been the topic of many articles, in and out of Venezuela; Rómulo Betancourt, "Comunidad Interamericana sin Dictadura," Combate [San José, C.R.], II (July-August, 1960), 7-9; Rómulo Betancourt, "The Democratic Revolution in Latin America: Possibilities and Obstacles," University of Connecticut Bulletin (June, 1965), pp. 5-26, especially pp. 22-26; José A. Valbuena, "Venezuela y la Doctrina Betancourt," Bohemia Libre Portorriqueña [Caracas], LV (May 10, 1964), 10-13; Gonzalo Facio, "No se Debe Reconocer a los Gobiernos Opuestos a la Democracia y a las Reformas," Bohemia Libre Portorriqueña [Caracas], LIV (December 29, 1963), 10-11.

⁷¹ See Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Pt. II, passim.

the case of Brazil--makes one wonder whether it will be Venezuela that will find herself isolated, not the de facto regimes she has condemned. On the other hand, her subsequent acceptance of regimes born out of spurious elections--the case of Brazil again comes to mind--leads one to question the significance of the Betancourt Doctrine in a practical test case of Venezuelan foreign policy.⁷²

More clear-cut have been the uses by Venezuela, during the AD governments, of the inter-American system in cases in which Venezuela herself had national and domestic interests at stake. The two most prominent instances have involved the Dominican Republic and Cuba, countries against which Venezuela had well-founded charges.

Rafael Trujillo, the Dominican dictator, had long been a bitter enemy of Betancourt and his party.⁷³ Trujillo welcomed the 1948 anti-Acción Democrática coup and maintained friendly relations with fellow dictator Pérez Jiménez. In fact, when Pérez Jiménez was ousted he first sought asylum in Santo Domingo. From then on, Trujillo became actively

⁷² Manuel Tapia Brea, "La Doctrine Betancourt; La Diplomacia Pierde Una Batalla," *Ahora* [Santo Domingo, D.R.], (January 16, 1967), pp. 14-16; New York Times, December 31, 1966, p. 3.

⁷³ See República Dominicana, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Libro Blanco (Contiene una Declaración de la Cancillería Dominicana Provocada por los Recientes Ataques del sr. Rómulo Betancourt contra el Gobierno y el Pueblo Dominicanos) (Ciudad Trujillo: Prensa Nacional, 1946).

involved in Venezuelan politics with the aim of finding and supporting elements dedicated to the overthrow of President Betancourt.⁷⁴ It was not difficult for him to find such elements especially among those who had profited from the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. A retired Venezuelan general, Jesús María Castro León, was given false Colombian passports in Santo Domingo and managed to slip into Venezuela through Táchira, Pérez Jiménez' home state. He and a handful of companions gained control of the garrison at San Cristóbal and launched an appeal to other prominent Tachirense officers throughout the country to follow suit and rebel against the Betancourt government. Communications were difficult, however, and in many instances the appeal did not get through. In other cases, the officers distrusted Castro León and preferred to remain loyal to the President. Finally, armed peasants and a threatened general strike in support of Betancourt helped save the day and the Trujillo-backed attempted coup turned into a miserable failure.⁷⁵

This failure, instead of discouraging Trujillo, seems only to have spurred him on to bolder ventures to do away with Betancourt once and forever. Only three months after

⁷⁴The Trujillo involvement in attempts to overthrow President Betancourt is documented in Organization of American States, Report Submitted to the Committee of the Council, Acting Provisionally as Organ of Consultation in the Case Presented by Venezuela, to Comply with the Provisions of the Third Paragraph of the Resolution of July 8, 1960 (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1960).

⁷⁵Supra, chap. VII.

the Castro León fiasco, Trujillo, with the connivance and aid of some Venezuelan civilians and military men, conceived a plot to assassinate the Venezuelan president. The plot nearly succeeded--but the one ultimately most deeply hurt was Trujillo, not Betancourt.⁷⁶ Ironically, perhaps, Betancourt's courage in the face of the nearly successful attempt to kill him earned him the respect of both civilian and military elements, some of whom had shown little sympathy for the adeco president up to then. When, still suffering from severe burns, he took to the radio only hours after the attempt, Betancourt reassured the people concerning the government's stability. This gesture was widely hailed as the act of a macho, a man who is not easily bent by circumstances, no matter how painful they be.⁷⁷

Before long, the Venezuelan police uncovered the connections between Trujillo and the assassination attempt. With conclusive evidence on which to base her case, Venezuela presented official charges in the OAS against the Dominican government.⁷⁸ A Conference of American Foreign Ministers convened in San José, Costa Rica, in August of

⁷⁶Harry Kantor, "The Destruction of Trujillo's Empire" (Seattle, Washington, 1962), pp. 3-5. (Mimeographed.)

⁷⁷Victor Manuel Reinoso, "6 Años del Atentado de los Próceres," Elite (June 25, 1966), pp. 28-36.

⁷⁸For the OAS report on the Venezuelan charges, see Organization of American States, Report of the Inter-American Peace Committee on the Case Presented by Venezuela (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, July 7, 1960).

1960; and for the first time in the OAS history, a member state was condemned by the Organization and it was agreed that diplomatic and economic sanctions would be levied against it. These sanctions and Trujillo's disrepute in the Hemisphere were contributing factors in the dictator's demise in 1961.⁷⁹

By this time, Venezuela was becoming increasingly more concerned with the events in another island republic, Cuba. At stake here, as in the case against Trujillo, was not so much a policy of following the Betancourt Doctrine of nonrecognition of undemocratic regimes or an interest in promoting a more active OAS as it was Castro's deepening involvement in Venezuelan domestic affairs. In the case against Cuba, however, Betancourt was to emerge both victor and loser--the same, incidentally, applied to Acción Democrática and to the AD-coalition government.

The tensions between Castro and Betancourt had begun a few years earlier and represented a reversal of their former close ties. Castro's guerrillas had received substantial aid in arms and ammunition from the 1958 Venezuelan

⁷⁹For a treatment of the important role played by the OAS as a contributing factor in Trujillo's demise, see Dreir, The Organization of American States, pp. 97, 101; Kantor, "The Destruction of Trujillo's Empire," pp. 5-6; J. Lloyd Mecham, The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960 (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 419-421; Frances R. Grant, "Hemisphere Repudiates Trujillo," Hemispherica, IX (October, 1960), 1-2; Serafino Romualdi, "Trujillo on the Carpet," Inter-American Labor Bulletin, XL (March, 1960), 1; Jerome Slater, "The United States, the Organization of American States and the Dominican Republic, 1961-1963," International Organization, XVIII (Spring, 1964), 286-291; Gonzalo J. Facio, "Sanciones al Regimen de Trujillo," La República [San José, C.R.] (August 13, 1960), p. 31.

provisional government. Many Venezuelans had been active opponents of Fulgencio Batista, and Rómulo Betancourt himself had been a prime mover in the signing of the "Pact of Caracas." This document, agreed to by virtually all groups fighting the Cuban dictator--including Castro's 26th of July Movement--pledged the cooperation of all signatories in the struggle to reestablish a democratic government in Cuba.⁸⁰

The overthrow of Batista in January, 1959, was hailed in Venezuela as an event of great significance for all democratic forces in Latin America. Venezuelans felt particularly close to Castro, not only because he had seemed to follow their example in building up a popular movement to overthrow a dictator, but also because many of them had personally fought at Castro's side. Fabricio Ojeda who, for a brief moment presided over the Junta Patriótica that ousted Pérez Jiménez, could boast of his personal experiences with Castro in the Sierra Maestra days. Ojeda was by no means an exception.⁸¹

All this helps explain Castro's wild reception in Caracas when he visited that capital a month after his victory in Cuba. He came to thank Venezuelans for the help they had given him; but even as he did so, he was already

⁸⁰ Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 145-146.

⁸¹ Eloy Enrique Porras, "Fabricio Ojeda," El Mundo [Caracas] (June, 1966), p. 1; Juan Sanchez, "La Verdad sobre el Asesinato de Fabricio Ojeda," Bohemia [Havana], LVIII (July 22, 1966), 74-75.

sowing the first seeds of enmity between him and the adeco leadership. His less than complimentary remarks about Betancourt shocked his hosts and when his brother Raúl visited Venezuela later in 1959, Betancourt refused to receive him. To further strain relations, Castro jailed David Salvador in May of 1960. A leader of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba and a man whom many adecos had closely known and cooperated with, Salvador had been among the promoters of a pact of cooperation signed between Cuban and Venezuelan labor unions.⁸²

The first clear break between the two countries, however, came when Major Ernesto "Che" Guevara openly urged a group of Venezuelan students visiting Cuba to organize a guerrilla movement and to convert the Andes into another Sierra Maestra.⁸³ Betancourt reacted to this challenge by instructing the Venezuelan delegation at the San José Conference of American Foreign Ministers (August, 1960) to sign the resolution against Cuba adopted by the Conference.⁸⁴

⁸²It should be remembered that during 1959 the AD-oriented Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV) had been considering some joint enterprises with its Cuban counterpart, the CTC. See *supra*, chap. VII and Guillermo G. de Mármol, "El Proceso Laboral en Cuba Comunista," *Política*, III (June-August, 1964), 11-31.

⁸³Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 145-146.

⁸⁴See Organization of American States, Sixth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs Serving as Organ of Consultation in Application of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, San José, Costa Rica, August 16-21; Final Act (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1960).

This decision by Betancourt, in turn, was criticized by his own Minister at the Conference, Ignacio Luis Arcaya, who was quickly recalled home. The disagreement between Arcaya and Betancourt brought into the open the deepening tensions between Arcaya's Unión Republicana Democrática (URD) and Acción Democrática. Shortly thereafter URD departed from the URD-COPEI-AD governmental coalition.⁸⁵

The final break between AD and the fidelistas came a few months later, at the end of 1960. Several AD elements rallied around Domingo Alberto Rangel in calling for a "true government of the people,"⁸⁶ a clear call for insurrection against the popularly elected government of Rómulo Betancourt. These adecos seemed to have greater loyalty toward Fidel Castro than their own party leader and were eventually expelled from AD. With some revolutionary elements from URD, Rangel and other adecos formed the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), pledged to bringing about a fidelista-type regime in Venezuela.⁸⁷

⁸⁵The deterioration of Venezuelan-Cuban relations is related by Rómulo Betancourt in "Venezuela Supo Dar Ejemplo," Life en Español, XXIV (September 28, 1964), 18-24.

⁸⁶Domingo Alberto Rangel, "Hacia un Cambio de Gobierno," Izquierda [Caracas] (October 14, 1960), pp. 2-3.

⁸⁷See supra, chap. IV; Paz Galarraga, Violencia y Suspensión de Garantías, passim, an AD publication; "Estatutos del Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria," Documentos (May-August, 1960), pp. 441-452; Department of State, World Strength of the Communist Party Organizations, pp. 186-188.

A year later, in November of 1961, the Betancourt regime formally broke relations with Cuba. At the Punta del Este Conference of American Foreign Ministers in January of 1962, Venezuela supported the move to suspend the Castro government from the OAS. In October of that year, during the crisis over Soviet missiles based in Cuba, Venezuela supported President Kennedy's moves and some of her ships took part in the blockade of Cuba.⁸⁸

Castro countered Betancourt's actions by giving active support, training, and matériel to Venezuelans pledged to the undermining and overthrow of the AD government. Cubans took advantage of the extensive Venezuelan coastline to smuggle agents into the country who brought with them arms, ammunition, and money to help the growing guerrilla movement. A persistent propaganda campaign was beamed to Venezuela with the message that Castro's was the "true" revolution while Betancourt's was in fact only a front for the Yankee imperialists. Castro's efforts were particularly effective in attracting Venezuelan university students to pledge themselves to the struggle against a government they felt was reactionary. A terroristic wave of violence took place, concentrated especially in Caracas and aimed mostly at subsidiaries of U.S. businesses but also at creating a general

⁸⁸ For the Venezuela-Cuba-U.S. interactions see Política, III (June-August, 1964). The whole issue is entitled "Visión de Cuba." Documents pertaining to the 1961-1962 events can be found in the various issues of Documentos for those years.

atmosphere of uncertainty.⁸⁹ The terrorists seemed to argue that this uncertainty would at once prove the "powerlessness" of Betancourt as well as provoke a sharp reaction from the military against Betancourt's "moderation." Ultimately, if the military took over--as it had usually done in previous crises in Venezuelan history--then the guerrilla elements could undertake a full-fledged campaign against a government without any popular base or electoral legitimacy.⁹⁰

The terroristic campaign in Caracas was a prelude to bolder adventures by Castro and his Venezuelan sympathizers. They felt strong enough to threaten openly all those who dared vote in the scheduled December, 1963, elections. Perhaps to lend substance to this threat, Cuban elements managed to bring to Venezuela a formidable cache of arms. This initial success, however, was to prove costly to the guerrillas and to Castro himself.

A week before election day the Venezuelan government announced the discovery of the Cuban arms in Venezuela. President Betancourt asked the Hemisphere nations to take "joint, energetic, and definite action to isolate and put

⁸⁹ Terroristic incidents were many, and so were articles on them. See, for example, Albertini, "La Subversión Extremista en Venezuela y su Realidad Actual," pp. 1-9; Keith Botsford, "Revolution and Counter-Revolution: or, Venezuela Revisited," Dissent, XIII (July-August, 1966), 377-390.

⁹⁰ Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 297-319; J. Faria, "After the Government Crisis in Venezuela," World Marxist Review [Ontario], IX (June, 1966), 51-55.

an end to the Communist bridgehead in our continent."⁹¹ Charging Cuba with aggression, Venezuela initiated a process that ultimately led to the convening of the Ninth Conference of Foreign Ministers in the summer of 1964, the vindication of Venezuela's charges, and the condemnation of Cuba by the OAS.⁹² Throughout the whole procedure, Venezuela insisted that she was not engaged in a fight over the ideological nature of the Cuban government--that was the exclusive and sovereign concern of the Cuban people and Venezuela was against any kind of intervention, whether direct or indirect. What Venezuela was protesting in the OAS was the evident aggression of which it had been victim by another country.⁹³

If, however, on the international level Venezuela stood vindicated and backed by the OAS in its charges against Cuba, on the other hand, at home, its differences with Castro

⁹¹ "President Urges Strong Hand Against Communism," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Fall, 1963), 3.

⁹² "Cuban Intervention in Venezuela; Excerpts from Report," Americas, XVI (April, 1964), 44; "OAS on Venezuela's Charges Against Cuba; Text of Act," Current History, XLVIII (January, 1965), 40-44; "OAS Approves Rio Treaty Measures Against Castro Regime; Text," Department of State Bulletin, LI (August 10, 1964), 174-184. For the Acción Democrática position, see the editorial in Política, III (June-August, 1964), 5-9; pertinent documents appear in the same issue, pp. 117-140. For a Communist reaction, see "Cuba, Venezuela, la OEA y los Inquilinos Biliados del Edificio," Política [Mexico], IV (March 14, 1964), 15.

⁹³ "Cuban Aggression Against Venezuela Confirmed," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XI (Spring, 1964), 11.

continued to be a source of political friction in and out of Acción Democrática, a topic more fully discussed elsewhere.⁹⁴ Cuba, for its part, had hardly been dissuaded by the OAS vote from its campaign against the AD-governments of Betancourt and Leoni. It was evidently involved in the continuing guerrilla movement in Venezuela, and the terroristic campaign had brought the military to the verge of staging a coup against Leoni. Only Leoni's forceful response--in the form of suspension of certain constitutional guarantees and permission for the military to stage an all-out campaign against the guerrillas--had apparently saved him from being overthrown.⁹⁵

Thus, Betancourt's and Leoni's attitude toward Cuba, their responses and the reactions they provoked in and out of the government coalitions and in and out of their own political party, could hardly be considered clear-cut victories for the presidents or clear-cut triumphs leading to the strengthening of Acción Democrática itself. The variety of opinions toward Castro within AD itself became quite apparent in the author's conversations with that party's leaders and members in 1964-1966. One of the questions posed was "Is

⁹⁴See *supra*, chap. IV; Roberto Rodríguez, "Solidarity with Venezuela," *Tricontinental Bulletin*, II (November, 1967), 5-9. Cuba, for its part, has seen its own share of internal dissensions because of its involvement in Venezuelan affairs; see Kevin Devlin, "The Permanent Revolutionism of Fidel Castro," *Problems of Communism*, XVII (January-February, 1968), 1-11, especially pp. 3-5. Devlin concluded that the Venezuelan guerrilla struggle, on which Castro had placed such high hopes, was faltering and becoming a source of intra-party dissension in Cuba as well as in Venezuela.

⁹⁵New York Times, December 22, 1966, p. 32.

Fidel Castro a Communist?" The position officially taken both by the government and by AD on this question was that Castro indeed was a Communist and, as such, was an advocate and promoter of violent revolutions in Latin America. The responses, however, were as follows: 60% of the AD leaders interviewed (35 out of a total of 58 leaders) thought that Castro was a Communist; only 46% of the AD members interviewed (23 out of a total of 50 members) agreed. Another question inquired as to whether or not the Venezuelan guerrillas were aided by Castro (or Cuba). AD leaders responded in the affirmative in 86% of the cases (50 out of a total of 58 leaders); only 40% of the members (20 out of a total of 50) concurred in such an opinion. When asked "what should be done about Cuba," apparently there was not much agreement either. "Blockade" was mentioned by 65% of the leaders interviewed (38 out of a total of 58); 44% of the members interviewed (22 out of a total of 50) expressed the same view. When further pressed on the question of Castro, most could not decide whether the best solution would be blockade, boycott of countries trading with Cuba as was being suggested by the Confederación de Trabajadores Venezolanos,⁹⁶ or simply "to leave him alone."⁹⁷

⁹⁶See "Venezuela, EE.UU. y Mexico Integran Comité que Estudiará Aplicación de Sanciones Portuarias a Cuba," El Nacional (March 14, 1965), p. D-1; "Confederación Venezolana Gestiona Boicot a Barcos que Comercien con Cuba," Listin Diario [Santo Domingo, D.R.] (September 13, 1964), p. 16.

⁹⁷See Appendix.

Acción Democrática has, in contrast, received nearly unanimous support at home for its stand in the OAS toward the 1965 Dominican Republic crisis. AD's position in relation to the U.S. unilateral intervention was clear from the beginning. Speaking to the Inter-American Association for Democracy and Freedom in New York, former President Betancourt denounced "the armed unilateral intervention. . . . This intervention, without any previous discussion in the OAS is an act that must be repudiated."⁹⁸ Later, he joined José Figueres and Luis Muñoz Marín, two other prominent leaders of the democratic Left in the Hemisphere, in declaring themselves "at all times ready to serve the cause of peace in the Dominican Republic in terms of a return to constitutional democracy secure against both Communism and military dictatorship."⁹⁹

The Venezuelan Congress went on record condemning the U.S. actions and in support of President Leoni's call for a special meeting of the OAS to seek the cessation of hostilities by both sides.¹⁰⁰ Leoni subsequently elaborated

⁹⁸"Venezuela's Ex-President Raps U.S. 'Intervention,'" Miami Herald (June 5, 1965), p. 10-A. The text of Betancourt's speech appears in "Documentos," Política, IV (June-July, 1965), 161-163. See also Betancourt, Hacia América Latina Democrática e Integrada, pp. 206-209.

⁹⁹"Letter from Betancourt, Figueres and Muñoz Marín," in Institute for International Labor Research, Dominican Republic: A Study in the New Imperialism (New York: Institute for International Labor Research, n.d.), p. 57.

¹⁰⁰"Documentos: Acuerdo del Congreso Nacional de Venezuela sobre los Sucesos de Santo Domingo," Política, IV (June-July, 1965), 159-160.

on the Venezuelan position: condemnation of unilateral actions by OAS members and reaffirmation of the Betancourt Doctrine of nonrecognition of de facto regimes.¹⁰¹ He, along with the other AD leaders, argued that if the Doctrine had been invoked by the OAS in 1963 at the time of Dominican President Bosch's overthrow, the Dominican Republic might have maintained a popularly elected government. This, in turn, would have avoided the "need" for the 1965 civil war.¹⁰²

The Dominican episode seemed to have provided a poignant example of the differences that do arise between the United States and the Venezuelan viewpoints concerning a specific issue--differences which arise in spite of Venezuela's firm stand against Cuba or the U.S.' repeated affirmations of good will towards Venezuela and its present government.¹⁰³ In fact, when examining Venezuela's position in the whole Inter-American system, its peculiar relations

¹⁰¹ Raúl Leoni, "View from Caracas," pp. 639-646.

¹⁰² "El Drama de Santo Domingo," Política, IV (June-July, 1965), 7-11; Alberto Baeza Flores, "La Crisis Dominicana y el Dilema de América Latina," Política, IV (June-July, 1965), 13-20. Baeza Flores, a Chilean, has been a close friend of many in the AD leadership and has contributed a number of articles to AD-oriented Política.

¹⁰³ U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Venezuela, especially pp. 312-314, 523-548; "Venezuela as Partner in Alliance for Progress," Venezuela Up-to-Date, XII (Fall, 1965), 3. The latter article has a message from President Leoni to President Johnson reaffirming Venezuela's warm support for the Alliance and the United States.

with the United States merit a separate treatment. Venezuela is not alone in this regard. The economic position, political influence, and military power of the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere are so great that the relations of the other 20 republics with the outside world and even their domestic affairs to a certain extent are perforce predicated in large part on their relations with the "colossus of the North." The increasing commitments of the U.S. as a world power during the last three decades and its interest in having the support of the Latin-American nations, first in the World War II and later against the Soviet Union, have made this problem particularly acute for all the Latin-American countries.

In the case of Venezuela, its relations with the U.S. have been peculiarly colored by the intimate economic ties between the two countries. This is not surprising when one considers that American-owned companies largely dominate the petroleum industry, which provides 90% of the country's foreign exchange and almost 60% of the government revenues; that U.S. firms control the burgeoning iron mining industry; and that the bulk of Venezuela's trade is conducted with the U.S. Furthermore, the U.S. has long supplied most of the matériel for the Venezuelan armed forces, has trained these forces, and maintains a large military mission in the country. Traditionally Venezuela has tended to align itself with the U.S., regardless of what kind of government was in power in either republic. This does not mean, however, that the positions of the two countries have

always coincided on the sphere of international affairs, that their relations have always been unstrained, or that Venezuelan domestic policies have always been looked upon with full approval by the U.S. and its citizens--and vice-versa.

United States-Venezuelan economic relations in the twentieth century have been primarily concerned with oil. Production and development under Gómez' concessions were controlled by British, Dutch, and U.S. companies, with the U.S. participation increasing rapidly and eventually becoming predominant.¹⁰⁴ By 1928, Venezuela had become second only to the U.S. in oil production.

After Gómez, Venezuelan policy was aimed at changing the original concessions to obtain the maximum possible revenue from the oil companies. This the companies resisted, but the example of expropriation of the oil companies in Mexico in 1938 and the advent of World War II which made Venezuelan oil essential to the Allied war effort, worked to aid Venezuelan claims. Also, under the aegis of the "Good Neighbor Policy," the U.S. government was insistent in impressing upon the oil companies the importance of re-negotiating the concessions in Venezuela's favor. New agreements were concluded in 1943 which increased Venezuela's royalties from 11% to 16-2/3% and provided a more favorable basis for the calculation of Venezuela's share. This agreement, coupled with new taxes on the oil companies, was

¹⁰⁴See Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela: A History, passim.

designed to produce revenues for Venezuela equal to the profits of the companies. Also, the companies were required to build refineries in Venezuela within five years. All concessions were renewed for 40 years.¹⁰⁵

The friendly atmosphere engendered by the Good Neighbor Policy, more favorable terms for Venezuelan oil, and the wartime cooperation with the U.S. did not last long. Acción Democrática's commitment to a sweeping program of social reforms, protection of national resources, and a "firm but rational" nationalism in dealing with other nations brought it into open and covert conflict with the United States. Thus, during the Acción Democrática's 1945-1948 trienio, the aggressive measures taken by the government to curtail the profits of the oil companies--mostly U.S. owned; to deny them the right to obtain new oil leases; and to start on plans to develop Venezuela's own oil company were viewed with regret and outright anger by some oil executives, long accustomed to a hands-off policy on the part of the various Venezuelan governments. Whether these executives pressured the State Department into not intervening in favor of President Gallegos is an open and much debated question. There are those in Venezuela, however, who feel that the military coup that toppled the popularly elected President only months after his smashing victory at the polls had the backing or, at the very least, the sympathy

¹⁰⁵ See Medina Angarita, Cuatro Años de Democracia, pp. 77-88.

of U.S. elements.¹⁰⁶

The attitude of the United States towards Pérez Jiménez could only be viewed with distaste by the adecos. While the dictator often cooperated with Venezuelan Communists, he imprisoned scores of adecos under the pretext that they were the Communists and thus a menace to Venezuela and all of Latin America. Pérez Jiménez was often praised in official circles--an adulation that climaxed with President Eisenhower's grant of a special commendation in 1954 to the Venezuelan strongman. Further, the man most responsible for the adeco persecution, the hated head of the Seguridad (Secret Police) received a medal from the United States for his "anti-communism."

The U.S. attitude toward Pérez Jiménez aroused much resentment among those persecuted by the dictator and this resentment found a release in the violent reception and attack upon Vice-President Nixon, who visited Caracas shortly after

¹⁰⁶ Luis Colmenares Díaz, La Espada y El Incensario (Caracas, 1961), pp. 5-7. He alleges U.S. recognition and tacit approval of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship was repaid in Venezuela by the granting of new economic concessions for the U.S. companies. In turn, the dictator personally prospered by receiving "gifts" from these companies--and praise from the U.S. government. For a different report on the reaction of U.S. business circles to the Gallegos' ouster, see "It's Hot in Venezuela," Fortune (May, 1949), pp. 101-107, 150-164. This article (perhaps surprisingly) reports that many U.S. businessmen were--or had reason to be--dismayed at the military coup of 1948. Subsequent issues of Fortune, however, printed letters from U.S. businessmen in Caracas who expressed a contrary view and a deep-seated distrust of AD and of Gallegos.

Pérez Jiménez' overthrow--at a time when the political situation was still very fluid and the provisional government was still unable to give the necessary security coverage to the U.S. visitor. President Eisenhower's reaction, ordering certain American troops and warships on the alert for Nixon's protection, if needed, only increased Venezuelan resentment.¹⁰⁷ U.S. decisions in 1958 to restrict imports of foreign oil and Venezuela's action that same year raising taxes on the companies operating the oil concessions further strained the already tense relations. Another undercurrent was the suspicion in many official and unofficial quarters that the newly elected President Betancourt had not completely broken away from his early connections with the Communist Party.¹⁰⁸

Fortunately for both the U.S. and for Venezuela, a series of events helped improve the strained relations. With the advent of the Kennedy administration and its avowed policy of coolness toward dictators and friendship for popularly

¹⁰⁷ Luis Alberto Sánchez, "El Vice Presidente Nixon en América Latina," Cuadernos [Paris] (September-October, 1958), pp. 75-81. Nixon's version of the incident appears in Nixon, Six Crises, pp. 209-234.

¹⁰⁸ Information made available to the author on a confidential basis by some of those involved lends support to the thesis of many adecos that as late as 1958 some U.S. officials--including the ambassador--still suspected Betancourt of being a Communist. Less significant--and also more predictable--are the conclusions of certain conservative American groups. See American Opinion, Anti-Communist Liberation Movement of Venezuela. Proof of the Communist Domination of Venezuela (Belmont, Mass.: American Opinion, 1959). This is a conservative polemic which seeks to prove that the AD is a Communist organization.

elected governments, Betancourt found a common ground with his own attitude as exemplified in the Doctrine that bears his name. The U.S., perhaps not as enthusiastically as some Venezuelans might have wished, nonetheless supported the Venezuelan-sponsored 1960 move within the OAS to impose sanctions on the Dominican dictatorship of Trujillo.¹⁰⁹ The Venezuelan charges against Cuba received the full support of the U.S.

Meanwhile, President Kennedy's announcement in March, 1961, of the Alliance for Progress, a 10-year economic and social development program of aid to Latin America, was generally well received in Venezuela, especially after Adlai Stevenson's visit to that country.¹¹⁰ In June of the same year, the U.S. District Court ruled that Pérez Jiménez, who had been arrested in Miami in 1959 at Venezuela's request, should be extradited and turned over to the Venezuelan authorities for trial. This ruling improved relations as did the final denial of appeal and the extradition to Venezuela of the former dictator in August, 1963.¹¹¹ Much

¹⁰⁹ Department of State Bulletin, XLIII (September 5, 1960), 357.

¹¹⁰ "Venezuela as Partner," p. 3; Benjamin A. Frankel, "Venezuela y los Estados Unidos: Ayuda, Alianza y Asociación," Boletín Histórico [Caracas] (May, 1964), pp. 24-36.

¹¹¹ "Venezuela Gets Pérez," St. Petersburg Times (August 17, 1963), p. 1-A; George Natanson, "Pérez Jiménez Case Helping U.S. Image," St. Petersburg Times (August 18, 1963), p. 2-D; "Incidente Pérez Jiménez," Panorama [Maracaibo] (October 8, 1965), p. 38. These are only three of a vast volume of articles dispatched on the Pérez Jiménez case in Venezuela and in the U.S.

improvement in relations resulted also from the warm reception of President and Mrs. Kennedy on their visit to Venezuela in December of 1961.

With the U.S. announcement in October, 1962, of the discovery of Soviet missile bases in Cuba, the OAS unanimously approved quarantine action and the use of enormous pressure to enforce withdrawal of the missiles. Venezuela, on October 27, 1962, was the first of the Latin-American republics to order the mobilization of its armed forces in support of this action and Venezuelan naval vessels participated in the quarantine patrol of Cuba.

In spite of the intensified Communist campaign of terrorist activities against U.S. installations in Venezuela, President Betancourt was able to return President Kennedy's visit in February, 1963, and found a most cordial reception and assurance of continued U.S. cooperation with Venezuela and the OAS.¹¹²

With the U.S., Venezuela has treaties of amity, extradition and the pacific settlement of disputes. There are agreements on aerial mapping, atomic energy, air transport, customs, maritime matters, passports, technical co-operation, telecommunication, and trade and commerce. Special agreements provide for U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force missions in Venezuela. Far more important, however, than these treaties and missions remain the informal relations between

¹¹² Documentos (January-March, 1963), pp. 719-721, 728-730.

the two countries. The U.S. gesture in the extradition of Pérez Jiménez made a great impact on Venezuelans, as did Kennedy's idealism as expressed in the Alliance for Progress, or the American oil companies' compromise on the tax questions. All these left a reservoir of good will--which the U.S. unilateral intervention in the Dominican crisis undermined to an, as yet, incalculable measure.¹¹³

Conclusions

In each of these instances--the Trujillo attempt to assassinate Betancourt, the Cuban support for subversive elements in Venezuela, the Venezuelan denunciation of unilateral actions taken against a sister republic in the Dominican crisis, and Venezuela's qualified friendship toward the U.S.--the guiding principle seems to have been Venezuela's own interests rather than her adherence to abstract, rigid doctrines of nonintervention or nonrecognition. In both the Trujillo assassination attempt and the Cuban subversion, Venezuela's interests were clearly drawn. In the Dominican crisis of 1965 these interests might have been less clear until one remembers the circumstances of the 1948 military coup against AD-supported President Gallegos or until one recalls the close relationship of many adecos and the "constitutionalists" of the Dominican civil war.

¹¹³William L. Ryan, "Venezuelans Fear U.S. Role in Revolt LBJ's 'Bay of Pigs,'" Miami Herald (May 25, 1965), p. 12-A.

But if we may consider Venezuela's position in all these instances as one guided primarily by her own national interests at that particular moment in time, one must also add that other factors were also very much present and very much part of the policies adopted. At times, Venezuelan national interests, objectively viewed, coincided with her expressed ideals; while at other times the ideals did not seem to be wholly in accord with the country's best interests. The mixture of idealism and hard-headedness has most often benefitted Venezuela, but has sometimes led to confusion--as, for example, in her recent relations with Brazil. Thus, when one examines the presidential speeches and messages concerning each policy decision, one becomes very much aware of their attempt to place the decision in a broad framework--as though they were in fact and in deed seeking to follow Simón Bolívar's ideals. In this framework, Trujillo must be sanctioned not so much because he almost killed Betancourt but because his action renders the bond that should unite all America. Castro must be isolated not so much because he is a Communist or even because he aids Venezuelan terrorists as because his ideology is extraneous to America (i.e., not Bolivarian by any broad interpretation) and because he violates the sovereignty of a duly constituted government. Petroleum companies must be pressed to pay higher taxes and invest more in Venezuela not so much because they are foreign enterprises as because all enterprises must work for the aggrandizement of the Patria.

This combination of hard-headedness and idealism that appears to underline the "firm but rational nationalism" in dealing with other nations has left an impact at home that is again a combination of idealism and practical politics. The policies followed in the Guiana dispute, for example, have so far produced a favorable reaction at home as well as abroad. The same can be said in relation to projects toward greater interchange in trade not only with Colombia but now also with all the participants of LAFTA. If the policies toward Cuba have alienated some adecos, they have given the AD party and the AD governments the greater support of the more conservative elements of Venezuelan society. It might not be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that, had not Betancourt and Leoni been willing to lose a few adecos sympathetic to Castro, they might have suffered a much greater loss by failing to maintain the loyalty of the military or the acquiescence of the more traditional elements in the society such as the Church or the hacendados. Thus, in their conduct of international relations, AD Presidents Betancourt and Leoni have been able to work with the challenges posed not only for the greater prestige of Venezuela among other countries but also for the cementing, the integrating of Venezuelan elements at home.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

The Acción Democrática Party of Venezuela, as we know from our introductory remarks, has been the subject of a number of articles and books in recent years.¹ An early monograph by Serxner confined its scope to AD's origin and development in the pre-1958 period. He did not have the benefit of interview data or in loco observations.² Alexander subtitled his own work "a profile of the regime of Rómulo Betancourt" and made only a limited attempt to stress the manifold interactions between the AD-party and the AD-government. Further, his study, though meritorious and bringing to light much information personally gathered by Alexander in Venezuela, lacked a theoretical framework that might possibly give some perspective to his account.³ Martz' book did have such a theoretical framework in that he looked at AD as a "modern political party."⁴ But though

¹Among them, Snow, "The Political Party Spectrum in Venezuela," pp. 36-47; Taylor, Jr., "Democracy for Venezuela?" pp. 284-290, 310; Busk, "The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution," pp. 776-778.

²Serxner, Acción Democrática of Venezuela.

³Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution.

⁴Martz, Acción Democrática; his definition of a modern political party appears on pp. 9-13.

published in 1966, most of his research was completed in 1963, and little attempt was made to use data from subsequent years. Further, Martz' book was chiefly concerned with the historical and structural aspects of Acción Democrática. In the opinion of his reviewers, Martz failed to probe deeply such topics as the relation between the party and the government in the making of decisions or the links between the party, its branch organizations (campesinos, labor, for example), and entities outside the party structure (business groups, for example) in government decision-making and policy-implementation.⁵

Our own study was an attempt to combine characteristics of these previous works, as well as to bring the information up to date and, more importantly, to place it in a distinct theoretical framework. A recapitulation of the theoretical framework in the light of the body of information heretofore presented and the sketching of some tentative conclusions with regard to the Venezuelan political system and the relevance of the Venezuelan experience for other countries seems now in order.

In the area of political integration and modernization, we have argued, no single agency is of greater importance than the political party. Political parties have

⁵Anderson, "Review of John D. Martz," pp. 1048-1049; Bonilla, "Review of John D. Martz," pp. 180-182.

been closely associated with the modernization of Western societies and, in various forms, have become the instruments of modernization in many of the countries of the developing areas. In these countries, further, it is often the case that a party has been largely instrumental in mobilizing the populace--serving as a channel between the government and the governed and integrating various sectors of the society--in the struggle for modernization.⁶ The party becomes the agency which seeks to bring within its own jurisdiction the various sectors, individuals, and geographical regions--it seeks to become the crucible or focal point where all these different factors come together in a common search for power or the means to fulfill their own particular demands.⁷

For those more developed countries where political parties and a party system have been in existence for a long time, where the population is already literate, participant, mobilized, and integrated into national affairs, the chief functions of political parties are to organize public opinion and test attitudes and to transmit these to government officials and leaders so that the ruled and the rulers, the public and the government, are in reasonably

⁶ See Hodgkin, African Political Parties, especially pp. 150-155 and Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development," pp. 52-64.

⁷ See LaPalombara and Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development, passim.

close accord. The entire representative principle of government rests on this relationship.⁸

But for the political party and the political leader in a modernizing system, the representativeness of the party must be complemented by its ability to lead. Democracy must thus be defined not only in terms of the classic freedoms, but also in terms of the ability of the government to secure a better life for all elements in the society. In the wake of the "revolution of rising expectations," democracy has come to be understood as involving a variety of economic and social objectives: the expansion of national output and national income (in the Venezuelan case, industrial diversification and the leveling of income differentials); a more effective mobilizing of labor and the peasantry; a more rapid development of power, communications, and welfare services; the elimination of "backwardness" and illiteracy through mass education. Thus the slogan "democratic freedom" actually becomes "the freedom to enjoy the blessings of a Western standard of subsistence."⁹

Confronted with such a broad, all-encompassing definition of democracy, coupled with the need to develop the basic social and economic requisites in order that democracy

⁸ See Sorauf, Political Parties and the American System, especially pp. 10-15.

⁹ Hodgkin, African Political Parties, pp. 155-160; Apter, The Gold Coast in Transition, chaps. V-XIV; Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, passim.

may be viable and function effectively,¹⁰ the party in a modernizing system can hardly afford the luxury of limiting itself to the more or less passive role of transmitting private wants to the makers of public policies. Nor is the party solely an aggregative device, collecting various expressions of want, of belief, and of outlook. The party cannot simply present candidates and run an election campaign periodically--as is most often the case in the more developed nations. On the contrary, the political party in a modernizing society is compelled to play an active entrepreneurial role in the formation of those ideas and in the linking of the public and the leadership in such a way that power is generated, mobilized, and directed. Viewed in this manner, the party not only represents the membership at the same time that it forms a link between the government and the governed, but it also leads those it represents by actually articulating and developing for them new goals and interpretations of modernity and of national integration.¹¹

¹⁰Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," pp. 69-105. It is interesting to recall in this connection that Bolívar's "effective government" was defined as "one that produces the maximum of felicity, of social security, and of political stability." To Venezuela's foremost hero and political thinker, this "effective government" would not only fulfill the material desires and needs of the population but would also lead this population to greater creative enterprises. Because it would fulfill the population's demands, this "effective government" would merit their support and thus it would enjoy stability. Further, it was Bolívar's contention that this "effective government" would become feasible not through complicated legalistic structures but through the will of men bent upon the daily tasks of helping and leading their fellow men. See Salcedo-Bastardo, Visión y Revisión de Bolívar, pp. 109-115.

¹¹Apter, The Politics of Modernization, pp. 179-222.

In devolving these "representative" and "leadership" functions, the political party is restricted by the entire sociopolitical framework of the society in which it operates. It depends upon the society's physical, demographic, and historical setting; it requires a constitutional and governmental framework congenial for its own very existence and functioning (i.e., the type of political party system allowed to operate);¹² and it depends upon the groupings in the society for its membership.

On the other hand, the political party itself has an equally important impact upon the entire context in which it operates. A party is, after all, a subgroup in the system with its own means of generating power. In terms of this aspect, which is the most critical in a developing nation, the party is often seen as the microcosm of the future society. Society and government become dependent upon party organization and leadership for their transformation into a modern and democratic entity and system. In this view, a party is not merely the passive transmitter of opinions from the individual to the marketplace of collectivity. As Apter puts it,

They [parties] represent a set of . . . variables that drastically affect social stratification, while giving concrete expression to grievances and relative scarcity of particular issues. Hence, in modernization, political parties play a critical role in building a system around themselves, by

¹² Duverger, Political Parties, *passim*; McDonald, The Study of Political Parties, pp. 34-35; Macridis and Brown (eds.), Comparative Politics, pp. 182-227.

becoming a modernizing device manipulated by political entrepreneurs.¹³

When examined in this context, the Acción Democrática Party of Venezuela, in order to fulfill its role as an integrating and modernizing factor, (1) must have been able to attract and to maintain a membership and a leadership that represented a broad spectrum of the society (i.e., it must have been multiclass in its nature);¹⁴ (2) must have had a flexible program to tackle the country's problems;¹⁵ and (3) must have achieved and maintained a position of dominance in the government so as to put its program into action.¹⁶

If it did not have (1), a multiclass nature, especially if traditional and powerful forces coalesced against it--such as the military, the Church, other political parties, labor, etc.--it then would not have been able to achieve or to maintain (3), its position of dominance, and would thus not have been able to put its program into effect.

¹³Apter, The Politics of Modernization, p. 222; see also Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy, *passim*.

¹⁴Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, pp. 57-61; Snow, "The Political Party Spectrum in Venezuela," pp. 36-47.

¹⁵Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, *passim*; "Plan de La Transformación Democrática de Venezuela," Política, III (September, 1963), 155-169.

¹⁶Acción Democrática, Acción Democrática: Doctrina y Programa, *passim*; Lott, "Executive Power in Venezuela," pp. 422-441; and Pan American Union, Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, 1961, especially its Titles VI, VII, and IX.

If it did not have (2), a flexible program, it would have been faced with the task of governing a country and at the same time finding itself completely out of touch with the causes and possible solutions of certain crucial problems at a particular moment. Without such solutions, no modernization process could be sustained for any lengthy period of time. This, in turn, might well have led to a situation in which the Party would no longer have held the respect and the allegiance of large or powerful sectors of the population. Under such circumstances, the Party's claim to being an integrating force would be meaningless and it would also be extremely susceptible to an extra-constitutional ouster from power.

Government, in other words, must not only be representative but it must be effective as well. In theoretical terms, this means that the modern political system must not only perform the input functions--political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, aggregation, communication--but it must also perform the output function--it must be able to make its programs and decisions felt.¹⁷

Without having (3), the administration in its hands,

¹⁷David Easton, "An Approach to the Study of Political Systems," World Politics, IX (April, 1957), 383-400; and Almond, "Introduction: A Functional Approach to Comparative Politics," in Almond and Coleman (eds.) The Politics of the Developing Areas, pp. 3-64. One of the major criticisms of the Almond and Coleman book is that it does not treat adequately or give sufficient importance to the output functions.

without the patronage, spoils, and rewards for loyal opposition as much as for its own membership and coalition partners, which control of the government entails, the Party again would be at a disadvantage. It could not maintain a large following for a long span of time and, more importantly, it would run the risk of seeing its program become a mere theoretical or rhetorical contribution to the scores of similarly ambitious plataformas de lucha which have been so prevalent in Venezuelan history. Again, in such a situation, the Party's contribution toward Venezuela's modernization and integration might have been negligible.

But this triad of multiclass membership, program flexibility and effectiveness, and executive dominance that undergirds our study of Acción Democrática as an integrating and modernizing factor in Venezuela was not seen statically or simplistically, but rather as a dynamic triad with manifold implications. By the same token, the Party acted and reacted to the milieu in which it found itself and only in relation to that particular milieu did it become fully comprehensible. A summary reexamination of Acción Democrática within this dynamic and complex framework will underline some of the conclusions that were reached throughout the present study.

After nearly a century and a half of existence as an independent nation, Venezuela had not moved much beyond the economic and political systems inherited from the colonial days. Until a few decades ago Venezuela was

basically an agricultural country, with few industries beyond those of rudimentary processing of raw materials such as cocoa, sugar, tobacco, or coffee. The political scenario had not experienced drastic modification either; the conquistador had been replaced by the criollo and, after the chaos of Independence and protracted civil disorders, by the caudillo. All political and economic power resided in a few hands; there were no links between those in power and those out of power, between those who governed and those who were governed. No intermediary or secondary associations were formalized, for only a few Venezuelans really mattered in any economic or political sense. There were no voters to be courted and the masses of campesinos were not only unenfranchised but remained scattered, illiterate, unorganized, with no other vision beyond that of the patria chica, the small plot of land where they were born, lived miserably, and died. Without a vision of a better future and without a voice in national affairs, these masses could be easily and safely ignored by those who retained the political and economic power in the country.¹⁸

This compartmentalization of the Venezuelan society with its attendant concentration of power began to give way with the discovery of petroleum and the ever increasing

¹⁸On the importance of vertical links--intermediaries or secondary associations--between government and governed see William S. Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1959), pp. 74-76.

exploitation of the black gold from the 1920's on. Until then, in the Venezuelan case as in every traditional society, political and economic power was monopolized by a very few. From 1908 until the end of 1935 the country was governed by the Gómez dictatorship.¹⁹ Gómez was a man of humble origins who gained political power by force and cunning and who, in order to consolidate his regime, destroyed the economic power of his opponents and created his own loyal economic elite. He also eliminated all the regional military leaders and united the country under the hegemony of Caracas. Until the advent of Gómez, the regional military forces had provided almost the sole access to national power. The Tachirense caudillo, though himself a beneficiary of this system, took pains to destroy it so that other regional caudillos might not grow strong and eventually topple him.²⁰

Gómez prohibited all political party activities--he did not even find it necessary to maintain his own political party--and although a Congress existed, it was dominated by men of his own choosing. An extensive spy system in and out of the government kept the opposition powerless and in constant fear for its own existence. But

¹⁹ See chaps. III and IV; Lavin, A Halo for Gómez, passim; Morón, A History of Venezuela, pp. 182-204; Pablo Emilio Fernández, Gómez, el Rehabilitador (Caracas, 1956); Vallenilla Lanz, Cesarismo Democrático, passim.

though Gómez kept a tight control over the political life of Venezuela, he opened the country to foreign investors and entrepreneurs.²¹ From the 1920's on, Venezuela was fast becoming one of the world's greatest producers of petroleum. The exploitation of petroleum meant the influx of foreign investors--and also the arrival of specialized labor, many of whom had been exposed to socialistic ideas. The profits from oil made possible a growing middle class which became increasingly insistent on a larger participation in government. Thus, though Gómez was clearly an authoritarian caudillo, underlying social and economic changes took place during his rule which would have enormous implications for the modernization of Venezuela--the old traditional agrarian and semifeudal order began to give way to newer, more modern societal groups, industrialization, and changing values.

By the end of the 1920's the incipient middle class, the growing number of university students, labor, and intellectuals felt strong enough to become openly critical of the lack of political freedom and access to government. A number of attempts to overthrow Gómez took place, the most daring of which lasted for a brief but unforgettable moment in 1928.²² But it was only with Gómez' death in 1935 that political party activity became possible. It was at this

²¹Lieuwen, Petroleum in Venezuela, passim.

²²Martz, "Venezuela's 'Generation of '28,'" pp. 17-33.

time also that the parties that possess the greatest influence today came to life.

Gómez' death did not, however, result in the immediate destruction of his political system. The Congress controlled by his supporters chose the Minister of War as his successor and then in 1940 chose Medina Angarita, another Gomecista general, for a period of five years. Medina, though a Tachirensé like his predecessors, seemed to have a much wider vision than theirs--a much greater preoccupation with forging a strong nation, not solely of benefitting the Tachirensé clique. He was also influenced by the revolutionary trends of the twentieth century and by the worldwide democratic spirit ushered in by the Allied effort against fascism during World War II. Medina undertook some economic reforms and permitted free political activities, although he still refrained from completely opening up the avenues for full political and electoral participation. Acción Democrática, with a socialistic orientation, profited from the period of comparative freedom under Medina and organized a large political machine encompassing members of the middle class, the workers, and the campesinos. Several other parties were also organized, but what is significant is that none represented the interests of the traditional holders of economic power.

There is a plausible explanation for the indifference to party organization by the economically powerful groups. Their traditional alliance with the army, they felt, assured

their domination of national affairs without the need to enter the political arena. Also, as long as the electorate remained limited by various regulations and qualifications, as long as the major elections remained indirect, as long as political parties included only small groups of militant members, these economically powerful groups could maintain their terms for an alliance with the army and, through this alliance, control the government. However, the bases of their army alliance were also being eroded. Gómez had broken down the caudillo system and in the process had begun the professionalization of the army. A more rationalized military organization had been created and, after Gómez' death, advancement through the ranks was becoming increasingly less arbitrary. But the process had gone only part way; Gómez' successors had not removed the high ranking officers whom Gómez had appointed--largely semiliterate cronies from Táchira. The result was the creation of an increasingly frustrated group of younger officers. Their frustrations coincided with those of the emerging political leaders. From this coincidence emerged an alliance between Acción Democrática and the armed forces that overthrew Medina at the end of 1945.

The new government immediately took steps to consolidate its power by electoral means and through the intensive organization of economically underprivileged groups that would enlarge not only the Acción Democrática ranks but would also give support to its government. To do this, the government

modified the electoral system, giving the vote to women, to illiterates, reducing to 18 years the minimum age for voting, and simplifying the procedures for electoral inscription. It also modified labor legislation, establishing in the Constitution the right to strike and the machinery for collective bargaining. It raised taxes on the petroleum companies and the income tax rate. As a first step towards an envisaged comprehensive agrarian reform, it helped campesinos to organize themselves into peasant leagues and often these leagues succeeded in forcing the big landowners to rent or sell land to farm workers. All these governmental measures benefited and enlarged the AD membership and hence increased that party's power at the same time that it extended the popular support for the AD government. In the presidential election at the end of 1947, hence, a member of Acción Democrática won by an overwhelming majority. Political power had finally passed to the hands of the economically deprived sectors of the Venezuelan society--to those who had always made up the bulk of the country's population but who had traditionally been excluded from participation in the nation's affairs and from a share in its growing affluence.

Yet, the first president ever elected with mass participation and by direct vote held office for only seven months. He was overthrown by a new alliance of the army with the traditional holders of economic power. This development was not surprising if one takes into consideration the

circumstances of the time. Acción Democrática had taken steps to expand the electorate and to consolidate its electoral power, but it had not firmly established elections as the only proper or accepted way to achieve power--after all, AD itself had come to power in 1945 not because of civilian leadership, not through elections, as the party doctrine had for so long argued was the "right way," but through its own form of a coup d'etat and its own alliance with the military. While between 1945 and the ouster of Gallegos in 1948 AD had indeed worked feverishly to lay the foundations for a popular basis of government, it had--ironically perhaps--alienated those very elements that still held the balance of organized power in Venezuelan society, the newly professionalized and ambitious army. In 1948, as before, the army continued to be the arbiter between the holders of economic power and the new political leaders. For its part, those sectors still holding economic power--the hacendados, the importer-exporters, the industrialists--could not, or perhaps did not find it necessary, to accept the economic and social reforms promulgated by AD. Why should they commit suicide? The realignment of the military with the economic elite elements and the ouster of Gallegos stopped the AD experiment in governing for the economically and politically neglected sectors of Venezuelan society and marked a setback for national integration.

The coup d'etat by the military, in alliance with the old economic elite, led to the enthronement of the

Pérez Jiménez dictatorship which was to last a decade. His regime coincided with a period of great prosperity brought about by the expansion of the world's petroleum market attendant upon the Korean War, improvements in terms of trade, and new concessions for the exploring and selling of petroleum. Prosperity helped maintain Pérez Jiménez in power in spite of a persistent and enlarging underground opposition. Prosperity made possible his construction projects, especially in Caracas and Táchira; it helped him maintain an extensive police force that was able to cope with every potential threat to the regime. Prosperity made enough money available to Pérez Jiménez and his friends to spend lavishly on questionable enterprises.

But when prosperity began to ebb because the petroleum market was becoming saturated, Pérez Jiménez continued to manage public finances as if prosperity would still last indefinitely. Ostentatious and financially ruinous projects continued to be built even though the revenues from foreign trade had declined to a point where prudence would have cautioned their curtailment. Just as important, with the passage of time, the Pérez Jiménez administration became ever more a dictatorship of a clique, not of the army. This latter mistake forced him to build up his own security force independent of the army and, of course, rival to it. When economic prosperity declined sharply in 1957, the dissatisfaction of the economic groups and of the military was added to the other latent conflicts--

the resentment of labor, the strengthening of the underground forces led by Acción Democrática--and the regime collapsed in early 1958.²³

Pérez Jiménez' fall again made possible the open operation of political parties; and AD, whose machinery had not been destroyed in spite of the exile of its principal leaders for nearly a decade, again won the subsequent elections. This time Acción Democrática's fundamental preoccupations were precisely what before had constituted its main weakness: it sought to create the conditions which would preserve the stability of the governmental system and, to this end, established an alliance with a more conservative political party, the social Christian COPEI, that had been its greatest enemy during the 1945-1948 trienio. It took care not to alienate the powerful economic interests but to bring them, instead, into government circles as participants in policy decisions, as intermediaries between government and business organizations, and as policy executors. Businessmen, industrialists, and clerics participated in the drafting of the agrarian reform law. The government delayed entry into the Latin American

²³Ahumada, "Hypothesis for the Diagnosis of a Situation of Social Change," in Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, pp. 34-45. For Pérez Jiménez' own rationalizations for his regime to 1954, see Marcos Pérez Jiménez, Pensamiento Político del Presidente de Venezuela (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1954). This is a collection of speeches, most of which were delivered to military groups. The introductory remarks (pp. 5-6) contrast the "AD subversion" with the "Armed Forces' intuition in perceiving and realizing the National Welfare."

Common Market (LAFTA) until such entry became feasible and profitable from the standpoint of Venezuelan business and industrial executives. The Guayana Project promised a tremendous array of opportunities for Venezuelan entrepreneurs. The campesino federation, the pro-AD FCV, discouraged its members from "invading" latifundia and began to provide a more effective channel of communication between its members, the government, and the latifundists within the agrarian reform law framework.

Gradually the power of the army was diminished, first by dividing command and then by eliminating officers whose loyalty to the democratic regime was doubted. Many officers were assigned tours of duty at embassies abroad while others within Venezuela itself were given prestigious but isolated posts of various types. The construction of officers clubs and better pay for the armed forces continued as in the days of Pérez Jiménez, but they were now presented not as "show-cases" but as rewards for well deserving supporters and defenders of constitutionalism. The institutionalization and professionalization of the military was being consolidated with new military schools and specialization abroad, especially in the United States. Programs of "civic action" received wide coverage and government subsidies while Betancourt and Leoni gave virtually free rein to the military to pursue its favorite activity of uncovering and destroying guerrillas.²⁴

²⁴García Villasmil, "Las Fuerzas Armadas de la República," pp. 161-169.

The government's relations with the military, along with its conciliatory attitude towards businessmen, industrialists, and hacendados, reinforced the view held by some of the economically powerful groups--primarily the new industrialists--that a return to political power through alliances with the army might hold more risks than advantages. Those dissatisfied with the AD governments, especially after certain putschist adventures such as those of Castro León and Próceres had proved costly failures, appeared now inclined to work within the framework provided by the government and the constitution. This meant that for the first time in Venezuelan history, economically powerful elements, instead of using the military as their entrée to government, were now willing to organize their own groupings such as the Pro-Venezuela, or their own political movements such as the AVI, or their own parties, like Uslar Pietri's FND. In this they were in fact copying Acción Democrática's techniques as well as envisaging the possibility of using their own partisan organs as channels between themselves and the majoritarian government. It was fortunate for the prospects of national integration in Venezuela that both Presidents Betancourt and Leóni reciprocated by using these non-adeco channels to communicate with those very groups that, by and large, still remained outside AD.²⁵

²⁵Boersner, "El Proceso Electoral Venezolano," pp. 73-96.

In this context, the threat of the familiar Venezuelan rightist coup--the outcome of an alliance between the military and the economically powerful elements, usually at a time of crisis--appeared to have diminished considerably with the opening of legitimate and peaceful avenues of access to the government. As Leoni approached the end of his presidential term and of an unprecedented period of uninterrupted constitutional government, the possibility of a rightist coup could not be ruled out. But such a coup was now tied, to a very great extent, to the actions taken by those very elements in the Venezuelan society who themselves at one time made up an important sector of Acción Democrática.

The origins of AD may be traced back to 1928 when a number of university students and intellectuals rose up in protest against the Gómez tyranny. The subsequent imprisonment and exile of many of these protestors led to their acquaintance with Communists and Communism. In Marx the Venezuelans found a logical explanation for their country's misery and backwardness, a solution to that very misery and backwardness, and a motivation they had lacked in their early, almost nihilistic rebellion against tyranny. If participation in Communist movements was short and, in general, left the future AD leaders with bitter memories of the association, that ideological experience, its economic implications, and its revolutionary drive were to become part and parcel of the leaders' political perceptions.

When the AD precursors, the ORVE and the PDN, appeared in Venezuela, their ideology and program had a strong Marxist orientation. Similarly, their structural organization was in part patterned after that of the Communist Party; not by pure coincidence, the basic organizational entity was a small, secret cell. What distinguished them from their Communist counterpart was ORVE's and particularly the PDN's determination to remain a nationalistic organization, without international entanglements and without having to follow Moscow's guidelines for the solution of Venezuelan problems. The same remained true when Acción Democrática was officially allowed to organize in 1941.

From then on and throughout the trienio, AD was closely associated with the underprivileged sectors in the Venezuelan society. It proclaimed itself a multiclass party, but in reality it had little place in its program and in its structure for the traditional economic elite or the emerging industrialists. This exclusiveness of AD meant a critical separation between political power and economic power. The AD Junta and later AD President Gallegos were unable to bridge this gap. In fact--through extensive social welfare legislation; the combination of the organization of peasants and labor on the one hand and heavy taxation on the other; restrictions on foreign enterprises; curtailment of favors to Venezuelan businessmen, hacendados, and military elements; and outright denunciation, trial,

and confiscation visited upon some of these elements--the AD governmental leadership seemed indeed to widen the gap between its supporters and those outside its ranks. Thus one may plausibly argue that during the trienio the impetus given to modernization--the first large scale attempts at industrialization and economic diversification, educational programs, health, and so forth--had not been accompanied by a similarly integrating effort in the political realm. Politically, deep divisions continued to exist between those in government and those out of government. The main difference between the situation that had been prevalent in Venezuelan history and that which prevailed during the AD trienio is that during the trienio those in government represented the majority of Venezuelans. A series of fair and honest elections had shown the overwhelming popular preference for AD. But despite proclamations by the AD and by Betancourt and Gallegos that theirs was a government for all Venezuelans, there were sectors of the Venezuelan society which felt that the AD government intended to work only for the benefit of the campesinos, the workers, the slum dwellers and similar elements. Rightly or wrongly, the traditional wielders of economic and political power--the hacendados, the merchants, the Church, the business elite--felt they were not participants in the governing process. Their anxiety was made more acute by the measures taken during the trienio, measures that deeply affected the traditional groups' economic basis and status. Rumors of a pro-AD

militia persisted and served to frighten the military. Further, the critical divorce between political and economic power during the trienio was aggravated by Acción Democrática's apparent intransigence towards other political parties. These parties were indeed far smaller than AD, but still they did represent sectors of the Venezuelan society that had a right to a voice in national affairs and to access to the political interplay. AD did not seek to work through coalitions during the trienio. The other political parties, with no hope of sharing the spoils through the electoral process and without access to the government, began to seek ways of toppling the AD government by other means. The disaffected economic elite and the military were not at all reluctant to join in this bitter opposition to the government. The convergence of all these factors and elements was to bring the AD experiment to a halt in 1948, only a few months after AD had demonstrated its overwhelming political power and popular acceptance at the polls.

During the decade of the dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez, Venezuela remained a highly divided country. The political underground grew vaster and included elements from AD as well as from a variety of other more or less Leftist groups--some Communists and later URD and even the social Christians made up the clandestine ranks of those devoted to the overthrow of tyranny. To these were added elements from the military itself who were less than happy over

Pérez Jiménez' favoritism toward the Secret Police. After 1957, elements from the economic elite also found reason for dissatisfaction due to the retrenchment of the all-important foreign trade and the financially ruinous programs undertaken by the Pérez Jiménez administration. Once all these variously inclined elements began to oppose or at the very least to be less acquiescent toward Pérez Jiménez, his days became numbered.

Since 1958 Acción Democrática has attempted to compensate for its mistakes in the trienio--it has been less revolutionary in its projects; it has been more conciliatory of the business groups; it has worked with coalitions of parties. This has meant that the AD Presidents Betancourt and Leoni have indeed been able to claim and to a great extent substantiate the fact that they are truly presidents for all Venezuelans, not only adecos, labor, peasants, but also copeyanos, industrialists, hacendados, military. Furthermore, the AD leadership experience during the exile days and its contacts with other more moderate Democratic Left elements--among them those of the U.S.-influenced ORIT--had made them somewhat less revolutionary than in their pre-trienio and trienio days. In this sense, Acción Democrática has acted, since 1958, as an element for integration of the diverse Venezuelan sectors. It has attempted to be a unifying rather than a dividing force in the society.

AD has been especially successful in integrating the

previously isolated and previously ignored elements into the national existence. Party offices can be found throughout the country, from the capital city to Indian villages lost in the interior. Both its peasant and labor branches have not only mobilized support for the Party but have also worked for the betterment of living conditions for their members.

But AD did not concentrate on these sectors alone. It has attempted to gain support not just from the traditionally downtrodden elements but from all sectors of the Venezuelan system. AD is no longer a strictly lower class party but a genuinely multiclass party; it still receives most of its support from peasants and workers but no longer exclusively so. In turn, the AD government has cleverly handled certain issues of foreign policy as a further means of rallying all elements on a nationalistic basis. This has been true, for example, of the particularly skillful handling of the Guiana case in which an old boundary dispute has not only served as a means to display Venezuela's "maturity" as a nation and thus reap prestige at the international level, but also as a focus for an extensive nationalistic campaign involving all Venezuelans.

On the basis of the support which the Party has from these various sectors, AD Presidents Betancourt and Leoni have been able to pass legislation and to implement programs that have gone far to make Venezuela a modern society. Agrarian reform, with all its limitations, has given

thousands of campesinos a share in the economy as well as has helped free Venezuela from its dependence upon imported foodstuffs. Greater sharing in the revenues from petroleum has made possible an ambitious and far-reaching program of industrial diversification. Education is at long last making more Venezuelans capable of participating in a technologically advanced society. Social welfare programs have been expanded, as have the opportunities for small industrialists, for housing enterprises, and the like. In all these instances, the guiding principle has been to take into account the "human factors"²⁶--the effort to use the tremendous physical resources of the country for the greatest number of Venezuelans. Thus, as an integrator, Acción Democrática, working with various elements in society, not only adecos, labor, and campesinos--its natural allies--but in coalitions with other parties and with the growing middle sectors, has pushed for programs that have impelled both the economic and the political integration of the country as well as the country's modernization.

²⁶ Ravard, "El Desarrollo de Guayana," pp. 111-128; Leoni, "View from Caracas," pp. 639-646. Leoni explains the "human factors" principle which his party and his government have attempted to promote by saying that "the Venezuelan Revolution is a revolution of free men... We place emphasis on the social content of our regime because without it all efforts to achieve dynamic change would be in vain." President Kennedy, in a letter to President Betancourt, declared himself "deeply impressed by the imaginative and decisive efforts that Venezuela is undertaking in order to advance the cause of social betterment within a democratic structure in which the principles of individual freedom and human dignity are fully respected." See Documentos (April-June, 1961), pp. 213-214.

Ironically, perhaps, the very orientation and policies that have made Acción Democrática in the 1960's a more widely representative party--as well as a more moderate and less revolutionary one than during the trienio--have made it less acceptable to certain elements that at an earlier time formed a very important sector of the party. The apparent alienation of these elements goes a long way toward explaining many of the handicaps under which the party has labored during the Betancourt-Leoni period and may eventually have a profound impact on the whole Acción Democrática effort to integrate and modernize effectively the Venezuelan nation.

It will be recalled that it was among students and intellectuals that Acción Democrática had its inception. Their early acquaintance with Marxism infused them with a great preoccupation to undergird their political goals with economic solutions for a backward, isolated, compartmentalized, pre-modern Venezuela. More than that, they viewed economics and politics as intimately intertwined. To obtain political equality it was necessary to attain economic equality and in a rigid society like Gómez' Venezuela, the only means would be the complete breakdown of the status quo so that the huge base of the social pyramid--the peasants and now also the emerging proletariat, the students, the middle sectors--would have access to the benefits traditionally reserved for those occupying the top of the pyramid. In this context, it is easier to understand why Acción Democrática,

which long argued in favor of the value of attaining governmental control through electoral means, accepted the co-operation of dissident military elements in the staging of the coup that toppled President Medina.

The trienio might be characterized as the reign of the revolutionaries within AD. They seemed anxious to push sweeping economic reforms, to organize militants among labor and peasants. There was no attempt to compromise with the views of other political parties or to make the reforms at least a little less threatening and offensive to those who had been accustomed to economic and political privilege. Betancourt, at the head of the Junta, proved a skillful politician in surviving everyday attempts at his overthrow. He also demonstrated the inherent popularity of his programs by the series of electoral victories gained by his party. His successor, however, proved inept at the daily balancing of forces; and Gallegos' electoral victory became meaningless when the military and the economic elite presented him with an ultimatum to moderate his programs or face an overthrow.

The Pérez Jiménez dictatorship signaled the need for the Party to go underground or to flee the country. Out of power and in many instances out of the country and thus out of contact with the rank-and-file of the Party, adecos underwent different kinds of experiences. Exile and contact with other democratic Left leaders elsewhere, as well as the opportunity to review in retrospect their trienio mistakes,

made some adecos less vitriolic, less revolutionary in a sense. Among these was to be a great many of those at the AD top echelons--Betancourt, Leoni, Barrios, Lander, and many others. Those adecos who remained in Venezuela were embittered by the relentless governmental persecution, and more than ever felt the need for sweeping changes in order to make Venezuela a popular and modern democracy. In the last months of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship some of these adecos found themselves receiving the cooperation of Communist elements who were now also active in the underground. This cooperation was to leave a strong impression among certain adecos and they began to feel that their party was not radical enough. The parting of ways between these groups within AD was to become clear once the Betancourt administration got under way.

While Betancourt sought to work for and with both the economic elite and the poor people, a group around Domingo Alberto Rangel became ever more impatient with "half way" measures, with compromise, with the need to work within coalitions. The continuing misery of thousands of people in the richest land in Latin America made the government reforms appear slow, pitiful, and unnecessarily moderate. The specter of the "two Venezuelas"²⁷--one modern,

²⁷The best description of the "two Venezuelas" is to be found in Héctor Mujica, Venezuela Primero (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1963).

educated, well-to-do; the other backward, illiterate, extremely poor--seemed more stark than ever. Betancourt, according to Rangel, seemed more intent in coddling those who had long lived off the land rather than succor those who cruelly suffered or died for lack of better conditions. The AD program--so full of promise and revolutionary ideas in the 1930's and 1940's--seemed reactionary to this group by the early 1960's.²⁸

To the disaffected adecos, Communism appeared the only true answer to the many maladjustments of the Venezuelan society, as it had always been the richest supplier of categorical explanations. Rangel and his followers left AD, formed the MIR, and began to work closely with the Communists.

The Communists were not burdened with the complex practical task of governing the country for the benefit of all Venezuelans or of having to compromise in order to obtain a modicum of reforms. Theirs was a class party in that, though largely led by sons of the Venezuelan aristocracy and middle class, it claimed to be the only true voice of the proletariat.²⁹ Further, the Communists were

²⁸ Taylor concluded that "although the private sector is sharply critical of some AD policies, that party's programmatic drift to the Right has been very reassuring to it over the past ten years. The same drift has alienated many . . . [But] the armed forces, who for many years rejected any government not controlled by military officers, have come to feel confidence in the conduct of public affairs by AD." Taylor, Jr., "Progress in Venezuela," p. 274.

²⁹ See, for example, López, "The Communist Party of Venezuela and the Present Situation," pp. 20-27; Shiblin, "No Peace in Venezuela," pp. 22-24.

not burdened with the fact that many of the difficulties faced by the AD governments stemmed from factors completely out of the governments' control--the decline of foreign trade and the unbalanced economic situation inherited from Pérez Jiménez that caused so many problems to the early Betancourt administration; the continuing subversive threat posed by Cuba. Indeed, if anything, these difficulties could be--and were--used to advantage by the Venezuelan Communists. Decline of foreign trade could be explained in terms of Yankee imperialism or could supply further proof that Betancourt and Leoni were really at the mercy of the U.S. and thus powerless to effect any far ranging reforms and the economic reorientation of the country. By the same token, Castro could be proclaimed as a truer popular leader than either of the AD presidents--a bearded hero who could mock the great U.S. colossus while at the same time he launched radical reforms for the Cuban dispossessed. Further, for the Venezuelan fidelistas, provoking their military through terrorism and through the guerrilla movement, could well make that military, less "apolitical" and "more activist"³⁰ and thus bring it to topple the AD government.

³⁰ On the political activism of the military, see Philip B. Springer, "Social Sources of Political Behavior of Venezuelan Military Officers, An Exploratory Analysis," Político [Pavia], XXX (June, 1965), 348-355. It will be recalled that involvement by the military in Venezuelan politics has been the norm rather than the exception.

On the other hand, if the Communists, the Miristas, and similarly oriented groups could and did use the AD governments' difficulties to bolster their own causes, the difficulties did not in fact have to be invented. Difficulties and maladjustments were real enough, and no adeco had ever stated that they were small or nonexistent. Misery, particularly in the ranchos, and unemployment were rampant in the country with the highest per capita income in Latin America. Farm workers continued to live in extreme poverty. A swollen bureaucracy drained much money that should have been applied to actual program implementation. Foreign interests remained very strong in their impact upon the national economy.

The specter of the "two Venezuelas" was visible to all. The makeshift ranchos perched precariously overlooking palatial mansions. Cosmopolitan cities like Caracas and Maracaibo, with ultramodern architecture, all kinds of commodities and luxuries available in abundance, and a relatively well-to-do minority contrasted sharply with the small, scattered farms of the interior which continued to have very few amenities. Petroleum, furthermore, had spawned a labor elite in Venezuela but deepened the gap between those workers and the rest of the labor force. Petroleum had pulled the campesinos away from their conucos but was now absorbing ever fewer workers because of automation.

In terms of ideological explanation for the "two Venezuelas," the Communists had little competition. At no

level was the educational system being transformed rapidly enough to help the student understand and participate in the world in which he lived or to adjust to a society that exhibited extremes of agricultural backwardness and technological sophistication. Conditions were ideal for ideological radicalism, an appeal those sensitive to social problems could hardly ignore.

The youngest members of Acción Democrática became increasingly alienated from their party and from their government. Many of them had risked their lives in the underground struggle to overthrow Pérez Jiménez and their experience in that struggle led them to feel that no compromises could be admitted, that no evolutionary plan could cure the ills of the "two Venezuelas," that only revolutionary means could possibly do the job. While struggling to overthrow Pérez Jiménez, adeco leaders in and out of the country had agreed with this viewpoint;³¹ but once AD itself took power, it was natural again for these same leaders to call for evolutionary means to transform Venezuela as well as for student support for the government. For these leaders, the insurrectionary days were over; they now made up the government.

It is thus not surprising to see that there have been serious clashes between the AD government and student leaders, many of whom have abandoned entirely their former

³¹ See Cárdenas, La Insurrección Popular en Venezuela, passim.

allegiance to Acción Democrática. They left the party in 1961 to organize a new revolutionary Marxist group. Other factors also influenced ideological radicalization and the parting of ways of many of the young with the vieja guardia within AD. Most important perhaps were the retrenchment in 1959 of the revolution initiated in 1945 by the AD Junta, now replaced by more moderate and longer-range programs; the economic depression that lasted until 1961 and threatened to reappear in late 1966 and which raised unemployment and misery, and curtailed remedial programs; and, of course, the Cold War and the example of the Cuban Revolution.

In this context, it is paradoxical though not unexpected to see that the same government which made education one of its major goals has been the target of bitter criticism from students. These same students made up the largest contingent of guerrillas by far, and violence and terrorism have become handy weapons of protest for those who just a few years ago gave their full support to the political party that led the fight against dictatorship.³²

The student rebellion against Betancourt and Leoni extended to some Venezuelan intellectuals who retained a pervasive yet undefined sense of futility, of helplessness, as though they felt Venezuela were becoming ever more modern

³²Walter Washington, "Student Politics in Latin America: The Venezuelan Example," Foreign Affairs, XXXVII (April, 1959), 463-473; Luis Beltrán Prieto Figueroa, "La Universidad Moderna," Política, III (September, 1963), 92-93; Hannifin, "Infiltración Comunista en los Centros Educativos en América Latina," pp. 1-11.

in an economic sense but remaining relatively static in a political and social sense.³³ It was as though the immense riches of the Venezuelan regions were being tapped at last, but throughout the whole process not much had really changed in the politico-historical pattern of Venezuela--a pattern in which most Venezuelans were always onlookers, seldom full participants, in which the government attempted to cure "the cancer" of the "two Venezuelas" with "aspirins."³⁴

Venezuela has a very large contingent of young people; and the youth participated actively in many of the memorable events of AD's history, as in 1945 and again in 1958. The intellectuals, on the other hand, have up to now been the innovators and the idea-men of the party. It is no coincidence that Betancourt, Prieto, Barrios, Galarraga, and many others have long been known as pensadores in their own right, men who are able to write and speak well, and who

³³Admittedly, such paradoxical feelings exist elsewhere in Latin America; see Silvert, The Conflict Society, pp. 3-9.

³⁴Quoted in Manuel Maldonado-Denis, "Report from Venezuela," San Juan Review, I (August, 1964), 5-11. Denis' article presents a poignant report on the alienation of some Venezuelan intellectuals from the Acción Democrática government. It is true that Denis' sympathies probably lie to the left of Acción Democrática but he is not alone in feeling that although AD's vieja guardia is still made up of a number of intellectuals, the younger pensadores and especially the university professors and students do not think AD is sufficiently revolutionary to transform Venezuela. For views similar to Denis', see Ruiz, "Cuba's Shadow over the Americas," pp. 455-475, and Miguel Acosta Saignes, "El Reto de la Política a la Universidad," Cultura Universitaria [Caracas] (October, 1963-March, 1964), pp. 7-13.

have brought fresh ideas to bear upon the problems of Venezuela. But they have become the *vieja guardia* for the youth who now finds itself searching for another partisan channel for its idealism and for the realization of its vision of the "modern Venezuela."

If the talented *vieja guardia* pass away and no others come to replace them--either because as young men they were alienated from the party or as intellectual adults they became disillusioned with the ideology and methods of the party and of the government--then the inevitable result will be the falling of the party leadership into less capable, more mediocre hands. It is unlikely that these mediocre people would be able to guide the party to victory or to govern the Venezuelan nation toward a better future.

To the extent that these younger elements and the intellectuals seek channels for their expression outside of Acción Democrática--and especially as they feel that their only hope is through terrorism and subversion to attain power eventually--to that extent Acción Democrática and its government will have failed in its attempt to be a wide enough conductor of demands/fulfillment so as to encompass all sectors and elements within the rapidly modernizing Venezuelan society. To the extent that these alienated elements reject the peaceful transfer of political power, to the extent that they remain alienated from the obvious majority of the population, to the extent that they may provoke a reactionary coup, they will prove that Acción

Democrática has, after all, failed in its attempt to be a multiclass party, a channel between the government and the governed, a factor in the peaceful modernization of the country.

On the other hand, to the extent that those alienated remain in a small minority, Acción Democrática and the government can still claim that they have worked for the participation of most Venezuelans in the political process. Further, to the extent that Acción Democrática and the government succeed in proving to other parties and to those out of government that a political party, organized upon a wide popular base and imbued with an expansive program as Acción Democrática has been, can indeed provide the ideal channel between the individual citizen, his interest organizations, and the government, to that extent Acción Democrática will have achieved its ultimate aims--to present an alternative to violent change of power and to offer a reformist alternative to exclusive government either of the Left or of the Right.

Given the reformist and multiclass nature of Acción Democrática, one may plausibly argue that AD has increased the chances for a pluralistic, democratic system in Venezuela. Not only has AD appealed to and fulfilled the demands of various sectors of the population, but it has also allowed the participation of other political parties in the decision-making process. In this process it has moderated its own programs as well as those of other parties. Its program for

the modernization of Venezuela has been marked by slow but steady progress; by the same token, this gradualism has thus far insured the very continuity a more revolutionary, and thus violent, program might lack. Further, the cry of "dictatorship" or "one party system" can hardly describe the Venezuelan situation. AD, though dominant, is hardly alone in the popular favor, as the election results in 1958 and even more clearly those of 1963 indicated. The formation of governmental coalitions has been necessary if programs are to be passed by Congress, where AD has fallen short of a working majority. In addition, not only within AD itself, but also in the AD-dominated governmental coalitions, there has always been a great deal of divergence as to program format, methods, priorities. AD has not always been able to push for all it promised during the electoral campaigns. More often than not, what has emerged as legislation--and even more so at the implementation level--has represented a great deal of compromise and a departure from the measures advocated by the more socialistically-bent members of the AD Left wing. Finally, and especially in view of AD's present difficulties in appealing to the Venezuelan youth and the intellectuals, there is a possibility that in not too distant a future AD might be replaced as the governmental party.

If and when Acción Democrática is replaced as the party in control of the government, it will be important to see whether the changeover will be peaceful and orderly.

It is not often in Latin-American politics--and even less in Venezuelan politics--that a party in power has turned over power peacefully to the opposition. If this occurs, AD may properly claim that its principles and ideas have become firmly entrenched within the society as a whole.

AD, this study has argued, has served as an agent of national integration and modernization in Venezuela. It has served to build up consensus--a basic agreement on the rules of the game--in the entire society. It has served not only as an integrator of diverse groups but as a disseminator of now widely shared values as well. In this fashion it has helped build up and maintain a new sense of legitimacy to replace that which disappeared with the destruction of the old order.

By holding the executive, AD has had a chance to institutionalize many of its modernizing programmatic goals. Thus, the promotion, under the AD administrations' aegis, of a comprehensive agrarian reform program, of labor legislation, of industrial diversification and welfare improvement, and of imaginative schemes for greater political and economic cooperation with other Latin-American countries all have long gone beyond the stage of simply plataformas de lucha of the Acción Democrática party. The actual drawing up of governmental programs has been achieved through the cooperation not only of the AD presidents and the AD membership and leadership but, more significantly perhaps, through the cooperation of various sectors of the society and of diverse

political parties. Finally, the implementation of these governmental programs has involved not only the bureaucracy but técnicos drawn from various sectors and from various backgrounds. And implementation has meant the creation or expansion of agencies--agencies that have acquired their own institutionalized existence, quite independent of Acción Democrática itself. By the same token, the beneficiaries of the AD programs can hardly all be classified as AD partisans or supporters.

A similar process has occurred to the party structure that has characterized Acción Democrática. The very elaborate Party organization spelled out in the Estatutos was in many ways a careful attempt to minimize personalismo, the imposition of a charismatic leader that overshadowed the party membership and ideology. The element of personalismo had been behind the appearance--and the demise--of countless Venezuelan political parties. These parties seemed to have emerged around the figure of an influential caudillo at election time and had ceased to exist once the caudillo had obtained his major goal, political power. The AD organization has not only avoided the most blatant aspects of personalismo but has also been successful so far in capturing the loyalty of a large membership basis. The organizational structure itself has been an important factor in the development of AD as a modern, democratic, and integrating force in the society. Its victories in various elections bear this out, as does the fact that other political parties

have sought to achieve similar victory at the polls by closely copying the adeco organization.

By serving as the model and the leader in the ideological, institutional, and structural realms for other Venezuelan political parties, Acción Democrática has made itself the central focus of a broad spectrum of public opinion. By its moderate and pragmatic programs and policies, it is worth reiterating, AD has successfully occupied the emerging and increasingly broad middle way in the developing Venezuelan political system. With its ideological and programmatic orientation firmly grounded in the center, AD has been able to achieve a wide basis of support and--for the first time in Venezuela's modern history--a measure of society-wide consensus. Though in the 1963 elections, for example, the AD presidential candidate received only 32% of the vote, the combined vote of all the center-Left parties which more or less share the same programmatic goals and orientations as AD amounted to fully 88% of the total. AD may lose the 1968 presidential elections; but no matter who wins, it must be emphatically stated, the same general policies which AD has pursued in the past are likely to be continued. This is so because the top vote-getting parties--AD, COPEI, URD, FND--are not all that far apart. They have tended to cluster around AD, sharing many of its traits and proclaiming many of its principles.

Whether or not AD is victorious in 1968, roughly

the same democratic and moderately reformist orientation will in all likelihood remain preponderant. In this sense, a degree of continuity has been interjected into the Venezuelan political system--a system which had in the past been characterized by chaos and revolution, alternative periods of dictatorship and anarchy, and extreme discontinuity in matters of governmental succession and of governmental policies. In the 1968 elections, as in 1958 and 1963, AD will most likely be able to claim that it helped provide the kind of climate--national integration, agreement on basic goals, consensus, a sense of continuity--in which democracy could thrive. AD has helped unify diverse groups and viewpoints in the Venezuelan political system around the center and thus has helped prevent the polarization of political forces around two extremes which in the past had often led to traumatic societal breakdowns.

AD, this study has argued, has served as an agent of national integration and modernization in Venezuela. Whether AD can serve as a model for other political parties in Latin America to follow remains an open question. We must remember certain unique factors that have positively helped AD in fulfilling its pledges--the immense physical wealth of the country, extremely capable leaders that have been able to hold the loyalty of the military in times of crisis, and the divided opposition that so far has faced these leaders. The nature of Venezuelan constitutionalism,

at the same time, has given the presidents a tremendous array of powers not only at the national but at the state and local levels as well. By dominating the national executive, AD has used these powers and naturally, more often than not, has emerged as the prime beneficiary. It is to its credit that these powers have not been more sweepingly used so as to cause intolerable strains on the democratic fabric of the system.

AD has been a catalytic agent for modernization. Not only has it mobilized new groups into the political arena and provided for the assimilation of others, but it has integrated the various political functions as well. It has given new groups access to decision-making and thus expanded the input function. Through its control of the government, it has been able to translate the demands and interests of these groups into decisions. Finally, its branch organizations and its far-reaching programs such as the Guayana Project have made its outputs--governmental decisions--more effective. By uniting these diverse functions of the familiar Easton-Almond model, it has further served as an integrating force.

AD itself is a modern organization, and it has stepped into the vacuum created by the collapse of the old traditional semi-feudal order. In many other Latin-American countries, no viable institutions or new legitimacy patterns have emerged to replace the old caudillos, the landed aristocracy, which are being destroyed by

industrialization, technology, new values, new social groups, new organizations, etc. In Venezuela, AD is serving--at least thus far--as an effective agency for bridging the transition between the old order and modernity.

The question of whether other Latin-American parties, with less advantages both in terms of resources and in terms of political powers, could obtain the same success as AD cannot as yet be answered with certainty. We may hope, however, that the successful model which AD in Venezuela provides may be repeated in other countries--for Venezuela, after all, has now attained the enviable reputation of one of the most stable, and yet also most progressive and democratic countries in Latin America. In this it has demonstrated the possibility of peaceful revolution and transformation of a backward society and in this it contrasts with the violent and dictatorial revolutionary path followed by Castro's Cuba. In that country, as in Venezuela, one party has served as a channel for integration and for modernization. Unlike Cuba, integration and modernization in Venezuela are coming about through a broad spectrum of participants and beneficiaries--not through the obliteration of participants and beneficiaries save those who are militant partisans. This difference may make the Venezuelan model the more appealing to those parties elsewhere in Latin America that strive to serve as channels for integration and for modernization within a democratic, as opposed to a totalitarian, framework.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEWING IN VENEZUELA

The Informal Interview and its Use in this Dissertation

Problems of research methods in the modernizing areas are exceedingly difficult and their solution requires prudent reconsideration of standard Western procedures, ingenious adaptation of these procedures in settings where they might be useful, and careful checking of the results.¹ Hyman, who has done extensive studies both in the United States and abroad, concluded one of his articles by pointing out the limitations of the national cross-sectional samples--widely used in this country--and by stressing the comparative advantages of employing more modest scale surveys of small but strategic groups when doing research in the so-called modernizing areas.² Gastil, who seemed to agree with Hyman's advice, obtained a rich source of data in his own informal interviews among a very small sector of the Iranian society.³ Similar studies of a more recent

¹Daniel Lerner and A. J. Wiener (eds.), "Attitude Research in Modernizing Areas," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXII (Fall, 1958), 273.

²Herbert H. Hyman, Arif Payaslioglu and Frederick W. Frey, "The Values of Turkish College Youth," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXII (Fall, 1958), 275-291.

³Raymond D. Gastil, "Middle Class Impediments to Iranian Modernization," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXII

vintage have appeared and have made a contribution to a better understanding of the political processes in various countries.⁴

All these studies were outstanding not so much for the "sophistication" of their concepts or for their extensive use of statistics as for their adaptation of tools such as the interview and the questionnaire to the particular milieu in which the researcher found himself. More often than not, these tools were employed to check, to probe, and to validate data obtained from other sources such as the newspapers, the census, or government publications. Often they uncovered data not otherwise available or rendered spurious written accounts of political events.

That the flexibility of the type of interview or questionnaire employed and the statistical limitations did not diminish in any way the value of the contributions made by these researchers is attested by many scholars. "The interview," asserts the highly respected social scientist Myron Weiner, "is a major source of data for political

(Fall, 1958), 325-329. Gastil's unstructured interviews served as the basis for his dissertation, "Iranian General Belief Modes as Found in Middle Class Shiraz" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Sociology, Harvard University, 1958).

⁴ See, for example, Phyllis Jane Peterson, Brazilian Political Parties: Formation, Organization, and Leadership, 1945-1959 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, Inc., 1962), especially pp. 7-12, where Peterson gives an account of her interview techniques and use.

science research in the developing areas."⁵ He goes on to point out that

It is no accident that much of the recent research on the developing societies has been rich with theoretical innovations. There are few beaten tracks on which the scholars can tread. . . . The intellectual openness of both problems and data provide exciting opportunities for intellectual creativity. . . . Through interviewing others [one] fills gaps that might otherwise never be filled if one were totally dependent upon the printed word.⁶

Weiner concludes that in the developing societies there are few contemporary problems of a theoretical or policy nature in which interviewing--alone or in combination with other methods--cannot enrich our knowledge and understanding.⁷

The interview--the meeting by one person of another for the purpose of eliciting replies to questions--was used by the author in her preparation of this dissertation with the primary purpose of complementing and of checking information obtained through written sources in the United States and in Venezuela. Further, her probing of some questions may well have revealed data otherwise not obtainable.

Prior to her departure to Venezuela in March, 1964, the author made herself familiar with much information on the Acción Democrática Party that was available in the

⁵Myron Weiner, "Political Interviewing," in Robert E. Ward et al., Studying Politics Abroad (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), p. 103.

⁶Ibid., pp. 131-132.

⁷Ibid., p. 133.

United States. Special attention at this time was given to the drawing up of an interview schedule and to its discussion with members of the Department of Political Science at the University of Florida. Professors Harry Kantor, the Latin-American specialist, and Gladys Kammerer, well known for her studies based on interview materials, were particularly helpful in this phase. The author reviewed her past experiences as an interviewer⁸ and reexamined interview techniques especially as they applied to field research in the developing areas.⁹

Preliminary contact through correspondence was made with persons in Venezuela whom the author felt could help her obtain entrée to the Acción Democrática Party and to official circles. A questionnaire was formulated and served as a basis for further discussions with the members of the

⁸ Iêda de Barros Siqueira, "United States-Brazil, A Case Study on Foreign Aid." Paper presented at the American University, Washington, D.C., 1960.

⁹ Besides those previously mentioned, see Herbert H. Hyman, Interviewing in Social Research (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); Robert L. Kahn and Charles F. Cannell, The Dynamics of Interviewing (New York: Wiley, 1957); Robert Merton, M. Fiske, and P. L. Dendall, The Focused Interview (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1956); Pauline V. Young, Scientific Social Survey and Research (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1949), chap. IX; Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz (eds.), Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1953), chap. VIII; Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch and Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations (5th printing; New York: The Dryden Press, 1957), chap. VI; William J. Goode and Paul K. Hatt, Methods in Social Research (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1952), chaps. XI and XIII.

dissertation committee.

Interviews were conducted in three different occasions: during the spring of 1964, during the fall of 1965, and during the summer of 1966. The author's arrival in Venezuela shortly before the March, 1964, inauguration of President Raúl Leoni gave her an exceptional opportunity to meet many prominent party figures who had converged upon Caracas and who, with certain obvious limitations of time, were available for informal conversations. At this time, the author discussed her dissertation topic and reviewed the envisaged questionnaire. Modifications of wording and presentation were made and the author became more fully convinced of the advantages to be gained from the use of an informal interview.¹⁰

The questionnaire was further modified and simplified after conversations with and pretesting of Caraqueños in 1964. It also became apparent to the author that she probably could obtain far more information if no notes were taken

¹⁰ "Informal interview" is variously defined, but in our case it approximated the type of interview used by Gastil, "Middle Class Impediments to Iranian Modernization," pp. 325-329, and labeled by Jahoda nonstructured, depth, nondirective, etc. (see Jahoda et al., Research Methods in Social Relations, p. 175). Jahoda concludes that the freedom which the interviewer is permitted is at once, both the major advantage and the major disadvantage of this type of interview (*ibid.*, pp. 176-177). Weiner is far more positive in his endorsement and he affirms that "interviews may need to be so flexible, so open-ended, and so tailored to each person being interviewed that the methods generally associated with survey research may not be appropriate. The researcher . . . , in the main, . . . must depend upon his own ingenuity and his own interviewing skills" (Weiner, "Political Interviewing," p. 105). One might also note that Jahoda was speaking of interviewing in the U.S. and Weiner in the developing areas.

at the time of the interview besides the jotting down of a few key words. This was done in Spanish and in the case the interviewee showed curiosity, it was explained to him that the author thought he had made a very good point and she did not want to forget it. By this stage, the questionnaire had been reduced to a fairly small number of "key" topics that the author had memorized and which she could ask in the course of conversation. Shortly after the interview--and always on the same day--the author transcribed the responses obtained as closely to the exact wording as possible by referring back to the notes taken.

Party officials in Caracas were most helpful and more than willing to give the author letters of recommendation to other party headquarters in the interior of the country. These letters were invaluable in the author's subsequent visits during 1964 to Acción Democrática local units in Mérida, San Cristóbal, and Maracaibo.

During the fall of 1965 interviewing was concentrated in the interior of the country and the author used as bases the cities and towns of Barquisimeto, Nirgua, San Cristóbal, Parlomar (Margarita Island), Valera, Mérida, Cumaná, and Maracaibo. The author stayed briefly in Caracas in the summer of 1966 and revisited party headquarters and some of the organizations closely associated with AD such as the Federación Campesina de Venezuela (FCV) and the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV).

Anonymity was assured to all interviewed and only in

a few cases, when the author obtained detailed and quite significant data did she ask and in all cases received permission to use the respondents' names as in the cases of the presidents of the FCV and of the CTV.¹¹

A total of 108 interviews were formally recorded; 49 other conversations were not recorded because they were shorter and more informal. The conversations with those 49 people that went unrecorded did not amount to interviews in the sense here employed and signified only brief contacts which did not cover any significant portion of the intended questionnaire topics. Of the 108 recorded interviews, 13 took place in Barquisimeto, 3 in Nirgua (state of Yaracuy), 16 in Maracaibo, 5 in Margarita, 10 in Cumaná, 5 in Valera, 11 in San Cristóbal, 15 in Mérida, and 30 in Caracas.

Interviews were obtained at party headquarters at a particular location, through the recommendations of the local headquarters, or through the introduction by friends of the author. The author was not turned down by anyone and was cordially received in all instances. The fact that she presented herself as a Brazilian and thus a fellow latina visiting Venezuela for the purpose of knowing more about Acción Democrática may have been an asset in a number of instances. Many times the author had the distinct impression that the reservations with which she had been

¹¹See, for example, supra, chaps. VI and VII.

greeted at first--when she had been assumed to be an American--were completely broken once the interviewee was informed of her nationality. Furthermore, though the Venezuelan woman is not as free as her American counterpart, she is a much more active type in social functions and even in professional situations than many other Latin-American women. Thus, the author did not feel as though she was being regarded "out of her proper place" when she visited local party units or talked with campesinos. One should be reminded that Venezuela has had a number of women who achieved a position of prominence in their professional careers, in politics, and in education. The agricultural extension service, for example, employs a large number of women who are active in various social services in the rural community.

More often than not, formal interview appointments did not work in the case of attempts to contact party officials, who are usually very busy people and who often carry on their professional lives and serve as government agents of one sort or another. The best method in their case was to show up at party headquarters after working hours and to talk with those who were there at the time. On a few occasions appointments were made (either directly or through the good offices of a friend), but in most instances these could not be kept, and the prospective interviewee was embarrassed--and the author wasted her time.

The interviews concentrated on party leaders and

party members in those groups to which the party has directed most of its appeal and who form the core of its membership--labor, rural population (campesinos). Of the recorded interviews, 29 represented conversations with labor people and 23 with campesinos. The remainder (56) represented conversations with people of various background--professional, students, etc. Of the total number of recorded interviewees, 58 of them considered themselves "leaders" of some sort in Acción Democrática and 50, members or militantes of AD. It should be pointed out, however, that by far the greatest number of unrecorded interviews came from people who considered themselves militantes, while the bulk of the conversations with the leaders were recorded.

The information obtained from these interviews was used in this dissertation as further sources of data but in no case were they presented as the sole or unsupported source of data. The use of interviews in such a fashion is easily explained. In no time did the author feel she had a truly "random sample."¹² The use of percentages was employed whenever these percentages seemed to clarify further an already established point--or a point which she felt justified from the bulk of data other than the interviews per se. The author

¹² See on this matter, for example, Leon Festinger, "Assumptions Underlying the Use of Statistical Techniques," in Jahoda et al., Research Methods in Social Relations, pp. 713-726.

did not have the resources in terms of money, time, and personnel to conclude more extensive interviewing;¹³ in a society as large and complex as the Venezuelan, it is physically impossible for a single person to get a sample of national representation which would be truly random.¹⁴

Because the sample of those interviewed could not be classified as a completely representative sample, some of the data accumulated with reference to the personal backgrounds of the respondents and certain other questions in the interview schedule have not been fully utilized. With some of these data, it has not been possible to provide quantitative analyses of responses or percentage comparisons of replies. Since the sample could not be scientifically proved to be truly random, some of the data obtained must necessarily be considered suggestive rather than scientifically definitive.

The responses obtained were, nonetheless, invaluable in their own way--provided, of course, that both author and reader recognizes their limitations and their lack of randomness. They fully justified Weiner's conclusions that

¹³She was, however, fortunate in benefiting from a very sophisticated study--based largely on interviews--still in progress in Venezuela under the auspices of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo, Universidad Central de Venezuela. See their first published volume, Bonilla and Silva Michelena (eds.), Studying the Venezuelan Polity, passim.

¹⁴Peterson encountered similar difficulties in her field research and in her use of interview data in the body of her dissertation. See Peterson, Brazilian Political Parties, passim.

interviewing--alone or in combination with other methods-- does enrich our knowledge and understanding of politics in the developing areas.¹⁵ The author chose to use interviews in combination with other methods (such as the extensive examination of primary and secondary sources on matters related to Acción Democrática). In the final analysis, two major contributions can be attributed to the author's interviews--they checked, they probed, they validated data, they led to data not previously covered, they cast doubts on written accounts of certain political events; secondly, and just as importantly, they gave the author a greater sense of familiarity with AD, with adecos, with Venezuela and with Venezuelans. This sense of familiarity will probably remain the most fruitful and enduring value accrued from the interviewing procedure.

The informal interview sought to elicit information on topics grouped in two main sections. Establishment of rapport¹⁶ was attempted through the asking of a few introductory questions to elicit general and personal information. In this phase it was revealed whether or not the respondent considered himself a leader or a member in Acción Democrática,

¹⁵Weiner, "Political Interviewing," p. 133.

¹⁶The establishment of rapport is considered crucial by all interview specialists. See, for example, Paul B. Sheatsley, "The Art of Interviewing and a Guide to Interviewer Selection and Training" in Jahoda et al., Research Methods in Social Relations, pp. 463-492.

how he had become a member of AD in the first place, and what he knew about the AD program. The second section dealt with questions on labor, on agrarian reform, on education, on industrialization, on foreign affairs, guerrillas, etc. In every instance the author attempted to see whether or not the respondent felt other party members and leaders agreed with him, whether these questions had been mentioned in party gatherings, whether he felt other political parties had shown a greater awareness of these topics than Acción Democrática. More specifically, the informal interview sought to obtain information around these key topics:

Topical Questionnaire

Interview No. Date.
 Locality.

Part I. General Information. Establishment of Rapport

Birthplace Age Residence

Educational Background

Marital Status

Present Occupation

Former Occupation

Income

Position in AD - Member Leader

Former position and/or Activities in AD

First Contact with AD

Voting Record (why?)

Politics in the Parental Family

Politics in School

Politics at Present Occupational Group

Can tell something about AD Program

Part II. Specific Information

What are the major problems facing .(locality) . today?

What are the major problems facing Venezuela today?

- Probes:
1. do you think the party feels the same as you do?
 2. do you think other leaders/members feel the same?
 3. do you discuss these problems in your party meetings?
 4. what should the party do about it?
 5. what should the government do about it?
 6. what should ordinary members/leaders like you do about it?
 7. has AD done anything to alleviate it? when? how?
 8. what do you think prompted AD's action in this case?
 9. what other party would have done better than AD?

Generally speaking, what would you like to see different in the AD program? in the AD structure?

Probes: same as # 1-3 above

do you think your ideas in these matters will eventually appear on the AD program/structure?

What do you think of the agrarian reform program? What would you like to see changed in it?

Probes: same as # 1-3 and #9 above.

What do you think of and what is the best way to handle (use same probes as # 1-3 and #9 above)

labor conditions

literacy program

other political parties

oil production

Guayana Complex

Fidel Castro - Cuba

Venezuelan guerrillas

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Iêda Siqueira Wiarda was born in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, on November 3, 1936. She attended grammar and secondary schools in her hometown and received a cum laude diploma from Colégio Izabela Hendrix. In 1955-1956 she came to the United States as an exchange student sponsored by the Department of State. From 1957 to 1960 she attended Nebraska Wesleyan University, where she received her B.A. degree with honors. She also attended the University of Nebraska and the American University. At the latter institution she participated in an honor's program for political science majors in 1959-1960. She received her M.A. degree from the Department of Political Science at the University of Florida in 1962. She is married to Dr. Howard J. Wiarda, an assistant professor of government at the University of Massachusetts, and has one child.

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June, 1968

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